

木村心一

shinichi kimura

2 そう、私は死を呼ぶもの

これは
ゾンビ
ですか？

F

ファンタジア文庫

Kore wa Zombie Desu ka? Volume 2: Yes, I am One Who Calls Death

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Kore wa
Zombie
Desuka?

◀ Sera

Ayumu's
heart-going-
pit-a-patter
waking up
report.

Orito: Good morning (low voice). This room smells reaaaally nice.

Ayumu: Now then, what kind of face does this normally dignified girl make when she's sleeping... body switching technique?!

Sera: How naive. Did you think you would be able to peek at me while I was sleeping?

Orito: Impossible!

Ayumu: To think you could flank this waking up reporter so easily!

Sera: What a disgusting lot.

Orito: Aikawa! I've gotten what we came for! It'll be offered as a prize for our audience!

Ayumu: Alright! Run, Orito! Don't mind me...
Gyah!!



Haruna ▶

Orito: Good morning (falsetto). Next up is Haruna's room... Aikawa, something's sticking out of you.

Let's do a quick underwear check... b-body switching technique?!

Haruna: If you make so much noise next door, don't you think I'd be prepared?!

Orito: Do you always wear pants as cute as that?

Haruna: As if I know! Get that microphone away from me! Get the hell out!

Ayumu: And after I finally managed to make this panel a huge success...!!





◀ Yuu

Orito: Good morning (smooth voice). Yuu-chan is really sleeping, isn't she? Cute.
Yuu: What's going on?

Ayumu: Ah, looks like she's awake. Yuu, do you know what we're doing here?


Yuu: Not the slightest idea.

Ayumu: A waking up report. Yes, huge success!

Yuu: What was?

Ayumu: Even if you ask me that...

Orito: ... In any case Aikawa, I don't think we can ignore all that blood anymore...



Tomonori ▶

Ayumu: Oh? Looks like she's sound asleep even at school.

Tomonori: Uwaaaah!! Aikawa! Don't just show up so suddenly!

Orito: Good morning (low voice). You're drooling, you know.

Tomonori: It's noon right now... hey, uwaaaah! Y-You two! Where are you trying to touch me?!

Orito: Listen, Tomonori. When you record someone waking up like this, you have to do these pervy-

Tomonori: Tomonori already told you to stop! You hentai!

Ayumu: Owaah! Stop it already with the shurike-gyaaahh!!! ... Oogh.



Prologue – Haruna... You're Supposed to be a Genius, Right?

(And then, ignoring it all has left me in this sorry state!)



If sparks fall on you, you have to brush them away.

Yes. As long as you continue to deal with the events that you come across, everything will go fine.

I always thought that that was how the world worked.

By the way... if what fell on you weren't sparks, but rather a necromancer, a vampire ninja, and a Masou Shoujo, how should you deal with that?

Also, they just happened to do things that made me happy. They even helped me study for my exams this time.

If sparks fall on you, you have to brush them away.

But as for everything else... it was best to just ignore them.

Part 1

“Mathematics I”... I really think that part of the reason why I didn’t want to open this book was because of that title. If this was “I,” then there was a high probability that there would be a “II” later. Ugh, why do they have to make these kinds of things into a series? For a zombie short on smarts like me, it was something that was impossible to understand.

... And as those thoughts ran through my head, sixth period ended.

Goodbye, “Mathematics I”... there’s somewhere you have to go. Now then... right back into the desk. ¬

Feeling refreshed, almost as if I had just sent an injured, sheltered, wild animal back to the forest, I looked up outside the window... today as well, the summer sky was scorched by a burning sun.

It was June 30th (Friday). It had been four days since Kyouko had escaped.

Kyouko, the one behind the serial murders, had sunk completely into the shadows and her whereabouts were still unclear. I thought that Dai-sensei would be able to find her quickly, but it seemed more difficult than I imagined.

Geez. It really got me down just thinking about that person. I didn’t want to think about the person who had killed me.

My mood changing, I turned my gaze to the inside of the room. Orito usually put his books into his locker and returned home, but today he was restlessly packing his textbooks. At that sight, I suddenly realized that we had exams next week. There would be no other reason for him to actually take the books home with him.

When I began to look at him as if I were staring at some sort of rare creature, Orito felt my gaze and came over, shaking his head resignedly.

He seemed like he was in an incredibly unpleasant mood, and the spiky hair he was so proud of was very disheveled.

“Aikawa, how can you look so unworried?”

As he fussed around to fix his hair, Orito asked me with a serious expression.

“About what?” I asked with a puzzled expression. Orito slowly shook his head, and pushed up his glasses with his middle finger.

“If you don’t do well on these tests, your summer vacation is going to vanish, you know.”

“Summer vacation isn’t just going to vanish, is it?”

“All you do is sleep during class, so you have no idea, do you?”

Seeming as if he were looking down on me, Orito advanced towards me. Did he want to punch me or something?

By “summer vacation vanishing,” he meant that we would have to take supplementary lessons, right? ... That wouldn’t be good.

Leaning my chair back, I stared up at the ceiling. In that position, I turned to gaze out the window.

I didn’t care about my test results. Honestly, I would be satisfied if I could just graduate.

So, back when I first entered this school, I didn’t care if I had to take supplementary lessons or whatever... but...

... If they forced me here at noontime, that wouldn’t be good.

I’m referring to the sunlight, of course.

Letting out a huge sigh, I took out the textbooks from inside my desk.

Welcome back, “Mathematics I.”

Part 2

Now then, it's all well and good that I'm being very high-school-student-like and going home with all my textbooks, but where exactly should I start?

Tossing my bulged out bag into my room and hearing it thud, I changed out of my uniform and peeked into the living room.

In the living room, all the faces I had become familiar with seeing were assembled.

One girl had chestnut, shoulder-length hair. Her eyes were as large as a cat's, and she was a saucy masou shoujo.

Another girl had long, black hair tied back in a ponytail and jade colored eyes. Her mouth was shut in a dignified straight line, and she was a vampire ninja.

The last girl had silky, silver hair and was wearing a set of plate armor and a pair of gauntlets that would have stood out even in Europe during the Middle Ages. She had blue eyes and was something of a necromancer.

I'm willing to bet that this was the only place where you could assemble such a shady and strange cast of characters.

The girls surrounding the table were staring at the plasma television as laughter emanated from the screen.

It was a Golden Hour¹ variety show. It was a popular show that I had even often heard my classmates talking about, but it seemed to be getting a pretty poor reception here, and not a single person was smiling.

Yuu looked refreshed, and concentrated on her teacup.

Ahh, that's good then. Let's study here.

Yuu the necromancer seemed to have an extensive knowledge of everything, and Sera the vampire ninja seemed to have a pretty good head on her shoulders. Haruna... well, there was that. Masou shoujo... yeah, there was that. There was definitely that...

I went to my room and brought back a collection of the most difficult math problems they had given us on Sunday. Math was... well, for now, it was important to just get through a lot of problems, right?

I quickly opened my pencil box, and after opening the problem book, clicked some lead out the front of my mechanical pencil.

“Ayumu, what exactly are you trying to do?”

Haruna stared at me in puzzlement as she mumbled. The ahoge coming out the top of her head jumped to and fro in curiosity.

“I’m studying. There are tests starting next week.”

“Tests? What kind?”

Haruna cocked her head to the side. Yuu sent more tea streaming down her throat, and tapped twice on the table. On the table was a memo pad with detachable sheets, and put her favorite ballpoint pen on top of a sheet. Just with that, words seemed to float to the surface as she wrote.

Probably stamina.

The cute, energetic, little-sister version of Yuu in my head spouted out “It’s definitely a test of strength!”

“Oh, a collision test?!”

“Don’t be an idiot. Nobody else would be able to take a test like that, right?”

“It’s a written exam.”

As the only one of the three who came from the same world as I did, Sera easily explained the situation.

As I was bathed with their inquisitive glances, I opened the workbook to the relevant pages (something Orito had told me earlier) and began at the first problem.

Short problem... long problem.

No idea... impossible.

As far as I'm concerned, everything from the first problem was completely impossible. It looked like I was going to have to start from page one and go in order... but, I had already forgotten how to do square roots. I definitely knew how to do these in middle school...

"Sera, could you help-"

I called out to the most intelligent seeming person within this group, but she had already inferred what I wanted to say and stopped me.

"If you needed help on the classics or geography, I think I would be able to lend a hand, but science and mathematics is just a bit..."

I always thought that ninjas were very good at studying too, but oh well. Japanese and social studies were being tested on the second day.

So I'll save Sera's help for another day, and for now ask Yuu... no, wait.

"Haruna... you're supposed to be a genius, right?"

That's right. Haruna was definitely supposed to be a "genius" masou shoujo.

"Supposed?! Are you making fun of me?!"

She opened her mouth wide, and her ahoge stiffened almost as if she had seen a demon.

"No no, I just wanted to ask for your help. Just take a look at this problem..."

I tried showing Haruna the first problem. And then...

"The answer is the square root of 3 minus the square root of 2, right?"

Instant answer. Wait... was she seriously a genius?

"... And what equations did you use in the middle?"

"Hueh?" She cocked her head to the side.

"I mean, how did you get there?"

Haruna gave a single sigh.

"What's 1 plus 1?"

"What?" This time, I was the one cocking my head to the side.

"I asked you what 1 plus 1 is! Answer me!"

"2."

"And what is 2 times 2?"

"4."

"And what equations did you use in the middle?"

Wait, was it that she could only give me answers she had memorized?

"... There are none."

"Right?" The edges of Haruna's mouth turned upwards into a smile and she looked triumphant. This is why geniuses are so...

"But if you don't write down your work, you won't get points for your answer."

"Huh? But the answer is right, isn't it?! Don't screw with me!"

Even if you tell me that... As if she were trying to squash a bug,

Haruna banged the problem book onto the desk.

“But people might think that you’re just guessing the answer right. Also, I want to know how to solve it. So come on, teach me how to do it from the beginning.”

“... A-Alright. This is annoying... but I guess I have to.”

Oh? I thought she was going to still be argumentative, but she was being pretty cooperative.

—

And at that time, I found out just how much I had underestimated her genius.

—

“So, with the explosion of the supernova here...”

It was my fault for saying it. “Teach me how to do it from the beginning,” I had said. Haruna had turned a poster inside out and pasted it to the wall, and was making a list in a language I couldn’t make head or tails of. Perhaps because she couldn’t find a proper pointer, she was waving a magic hand² back and forth as she lectured.

To think I would end up getting taught in this alien language like this... Would we actually be able to get to math by the test date like this?

While I gave noncommittal responses to her lecture, I worked on the problem workbook alone with my math textbook open.

... Yeah, I have no idea... ah, I’m not talking about Haruna’s lecture, you know? If I were, I would say that I have *absolutely* no idea... but in any case, math really was a weak point of mine.

And no matter how many times I repeated “I already know that, so just skip it,” she showed no signs of actually getting to the math, so I gave up and decided to just ask for the answers.

“Haruna, what’s the answer to this one?”

“Minus 192 times the square root of 3.”

I see. Where exactly did the square root of 3 come from? Hm...

“So then, around a hundred years ago there was a civil war... well, it’s not like there’s any reason that males would win against the masou shoujo.”

“Haruna, and this one?”

“X is plus or minus the square root of 5.”

Ahh, I see. Was that the answer...? I seem to remember that now...

“Well, certainly, I understand why they would want to rebel in a matriarchy like Virie. But still, everything was going fine, so there really wasn’t any reason for them to stir up trouble with a revolution like that. Ayumu, you agree with me, right?”

“Ahh, yeah. Sorry, Haruna, what about this one?”

“The answer to that one is 4.”

Huh? It was that simple? Was I wrong trying to solve it this way?

“But even then, they did well I think. Even though they were lacking in numbers and strength, they were winning for something like a week. I really couldn’t believe it. So I called the person who led their troops, a demon baron. He’s the only man that I will ever respect. If I had been the one leading that army, I definitely wouldn’t have won. Honestly, what strategy was he using there...? I really want to know.”

“Haruna, could you tell me what this one is?”

“I mean, in the first place, to think that people who can’t even use magic would gather and go for a coup d’état... it’s really just a funny idea.”

At last, it seemed that she had stopped answering me. Dejected, I

hung my head.

As I fell into a pit of despair, the one who offered me a hand was Yuu. She had been enjoying her tea while watching the television with Sera, but...

When I sent the problem workbook Yuu's way, she put her ballpoint pen to the paper.

In the next moment...

All the answers for that page had been written. For all the problems I had done, and all the problems that came after, the answers had been written.

All the equations that came in the middle were shown as well.

I should have just asked Yuu for help in the first place. Our resident necromancer was a woman of many talents.

"So, could you explain this answer here?"

Just knowing the answer wasn't enough; I had to know how to solve the problem too. Unlike Haruna, Yuu properly explained the process to me through her writing.

In no time at all, we began to work through the problems. Like the notebook of a student cramming for an exam, my problem workbook slowly began to be filled from end to end with notes.

"Ohh." Clapping for Yuu, I praised her highly. "Thanks. That's really easy to understand."

Haruna had broken off of her half-hearted lecture and looked at me with a somewhat sulky expression. Opening and closing her magic hand, she sat by my side.

"... Let me write all the equations in the middle."

"Ah, no, that's fine, Yuu already did it."

"Shut up! I told you I would write them, didn't I?!"

She forcibly snatched away my mechanical pencil, and raising her voice like a war cry she began scribbling away, almost seeming to release heat from the friction between the lead and the paper.

And then what happened? Through the ideas of a genius, what had once been a stiff problem book had been turned into something much brighter and which resembled a zoo.

In the blank space around the explanations Yuu had so courteously written, Haruna had drawn something that looked like a lion, which was glaring back at me.

What a thing this was. When put in the hands of a genius, a boring, old problem workbook would become like this. At this point, it really just looked like a sketchbook that would be embarrassing to hand in.

... Well, I'm completely convinced. Geniuses are just different creatures from us humans.

The lion began to chase a rabbit, but pulled a muscle... I could tell that much. But how exactly was this supposed to get us to root 2 minus root 3? I guess this only made sense to people that it made sense to.

"Now you understand, right?"

Not at all, but I lowered my head.

"By the way, is this going to show up on the test?"

"... No, the stuff on the test comes after this."

"Huh? So why are you doing this part of the book? Ayumu, are you that stupid? Do you have termites living in your skull or something?"

"I mean, if I want to do this, I have to start from the beginning."

"Well then, when is this test?"

"Monday."

“You’re not studying seriously, are you? Let me make a few guesses. Give that here!”

Haruna snatched away the problem book and flipped through it.

“What the hell is with these easy problems? At this level... judging from the season... the test material should be around here, right?”

For some reason I felt a pang of annoyance, but she was absolutely correct.

“Well then... here, and here and here... and then...”

One by one, she began to circle problems. It was a pretty annoying notion to have to do what she said, but what she was proposing was definitely plausible.

Even if I went in order from the beginning, I wasn’t the kind of person who was smart enough to be able to remember it all. And what’s more, math wasn’t the only test I had.

“But, Haruna... I have no idea what’s going on in that section.”

“As if I care! What the hell are you saying if you still haven’t tried?! Just do it!”

Well, I guess that’s true, but... well, I guess Yuu and Sera are both here, so it’ll work out. Let’s try.

“Bring all the textbooks over for the stuff you’re going to be tested on!”

Her usual teasing, boyish grin seemed quite dependable.

On the other hand, Yuu looked very lonely.

It’s not like I could read much from her usual lack of expression, but lately she really seemed to be lonely.

Right, that incident. Ever since I was killed and the culprit, Kyouko, had escaped, Yuu seemed to be frightened of something. And what weighed on my mind the heaviest was what Yuu had said at that

time.

According to Yuu, the person behind Kyouko seemed to be a “zombie” just like me. Did Yuu have a past history with this person? This had been on my mind, but I couldn’t bring myself to ask. If I asked, I felt like I would set off sparks around me. And my absurd, irrational worry was holding me back.

But... seeing Yuu like this, it was impossible to ignore it any longer.

“Hey, Yuu... are there zombies out there other than me?”

I thought that there were not.”

Thought, huh...?

“What kind of person was he? Did something happen between you and him? Please tell me.”

“I also have interest in this matter. If you do not mind, please tell us.”

“I couldn’t care less, but whatever, I’ll listen.”

We stared fixedly at Yuu. Yuu shut her eyes once, and after thinking for a bit tapped on the table twice.

In the underworld, there are those with strong abilities like me.

Among those, he was one. He was incredibly strong and dependable.

But, just as Megalo must eventually die, the time of his death arrived.

I turned him into a zombie. But having obtained an immortal body, he was swallowed by evil intentions.

I was the only one who could stop him. So, I spoke to him.

-

Disappear, I said.

-

We had thought that we had eliminated him.

However, he had only disappeared from that place.

“Does this person plan to do something to Hellscythe-dono?”

Sera had her index finger placed on her lips, and was nodding in comprehension. Yuu slowly blinked a single time.

He resents me a great deal.

We had vowed to protect each other no matter what.

And I betrayed that. So yes, I’m sure.

“C-Could it be that you were lovers?”

Haruna was flushed completely red. She seemed to have an interest in love stories. But, Yuu shook her head.

I unconsciously let out a sigh of relief.

He is scheming something.

With a quiet expression, Yuu gripped the ballpoint pen a bit more strongly. Sera’s eyes filled with a bit of compassion, and for some reason Haruna swelled out her cheeks and seemed to be thinking about something.

The silence stretched on. Everyone had fallen into silence like Yuu, and the world seemed to have frozen over.

Haruna was the first one who couldn’t take that oppressive atmosphere anymore.

“D-Don’t worry at all. Leave it to me! After, all, we definitely, definitely have Dai-sensei!”

With very little basis for her actions, Haruna stuck out her chest.

Sera and I chuckled through our noses, and exchanged glances.

“Exactly. I will protect you.”

“If it’s for Yuu’s sake, I’ll also do anything.”

Thank you.

Seeing as it wasn’t just me, but Sera and Haruna both wanted to help Yuu, perhaps a bond had blossomed between us after that Kyouko affair.

There were other things I wanted to ask, but my cell phone began to vibrate at that point, so I took out my phone while leaving the living room. It was a very unique phone number. From the Matelis Magical Academy...?

“Hello.”

“Ah, is this Ayumu-san~?”

A gentle and laid-back voice. Just with that, I knew exactly who I was talking to. A resident of the magical world Virie, and Haruna’s homeroom teacher. Nickname, Dai-sensei.

“Should I hand the phone to Haruna?”

“Ah, no no. I had something I wanted to ask Ayumu-san to do~.”

“Did something happen? Your voice sounds a bit strange.”

“Eh? You can tell? Things have gotten a bit troublesome, and I have something I can only ask Ayumu-san~.”

She gradually began to speak faster and faster. She really sounded like she was at her wit’s end.

“If you want my help, I’ll gladly give it.”

“Ah, that’s what I thought you would say~. That’s good to hear. Uhh... well, there’s something I want you to look after for me~. Ah, just until I go to retrieve it.”

Something for me to look after? Why me?

“Ahh... and this isn’t something Haruna can do?”

“Yes. Please keep it a secret from Haruna.”

I couldn’t tell Haruna? What exactly was this? She was giving me something that she didn’t want other masou shoujo to know about? I was also a masou shoujo for the time being, so was that alright?

“What’s the name of this thing?”

At my question, Dai-sensei chuckled.

“Even if I told you, you wouldn’t understand, right~~?” She seemed to almost be mocking me. Granted, that was probably true.

“Ah, I’m hanging up. For now~~, I’ll definitely send it, so don’t let Haruna find out about it, yes~?”

After that, she hurriedly cut off the phone call.

Sure, she’s sending it, but I had no idea about the when, the what, or the how. I didn’t get any room to ask for any of the crucial pieces of information...

I guess this is what dealing with any masou shoujo felt like.

Chapter 1 – This Device Makes it Rain Tonkotsu³.

(Oh right, he also did it with that leaf woman too.)



I feel like it's been a long time since I've studied.

Well, to be honest, it has been a long time!

Come on, I'm a genius, remember?! It was a waste to just spend time studying!

On the other hand, Ayumu is an idiot. He's seriously an idiot...

Seriously, I might as well start calling him Vertical Camembert...⁴

And then he... with that strange person we didn't even know...

He...

Ugh, dammit!

Ayumu should just go kiss an octopus!

It's not like I've ever kissed anybody before.

So why does this have to bother me so much?!

Part 1

July 3rd (Monday). Test day.

It seemed that Dai-sensei was in a huge hurry, so I was expecting that whatever she wanted to give me would get here pretty quickly, but nothing of the sort had arrived yet.

Shutting myself in on Saturday and Sunday to study... it really didn't seem like a very healthy way for a high school student to spend his weekend.

I had immersed myself in studying with the aid of unlikely, eccentric teachers: a self-proclaimed genius masou shoujo and an honestly multi-talented necromancer. But the results of that studying were amazing.

Up until now, I had no interest in things like tests, to the point where I even thought about how strange it was that people would actually study of their own free will.

But, this time I had studied of my own free will, and I ended up looking forward to the test. This was the first time in my life where I could fill out the entire answer sheet in just half an hour.

All the educated guesses Haruna had made about what was going to be on the test were right on, and I had Sera and Yuu carefully explain those sections to me.

It was perfect. A perfect battle formation. I felt completely triumphant, but also completely perplexed.

How was I supposed to get home alone at this hour?

It sounded like something a high school girl would have said a long time ago, but I was being serious.

Dammit, the weather was just too good. Rainy season, can't you

come back? Are you trying to kill all the zombies or something?!

As I thought about whether someone would come to get me, I gave out a deep sigh.

Maybe I should phone home and call Sera over or something. Sera was a vampire or something, and yet she had no problem walking out in the middle of the day... I'm so jealous.

But, if I just called her over all of a sudden, she might get angry. What should I do?

Nobody liked selfish, stubborn people.

I was of the belief that you should hold yourself back from saying and doing impulsive things. After meeting Haruna, I truly believed that.

Ugh, but honestly, I couldn't think of any other way. I'll just prepare myself for the anger and make the call.

Brr, brr, brr, brr, brr... brrrrrrrrrr... brrrrrrrrrr. Click.

"Shut up! Die!"

Click. Beep, beep, beep. ... The call was cut off before I got the chance to say anything.

... Haruna was the one who had picked up, right?

If someone else had made that call, they'd be in a complete daze right now, you know? I leaned my chair back, and once again dialed home.

Brr, brr, brr, brr, brr... brrrrrrrrrr... brrrrrrrrrr. Click.

"It's me."

"... Is this a scam?! Die!"

Click. Beep, beep, beep. ... What should I do?

Maybe I should call out Haruna's name?

Yeah, I should. If I did that, she would probably know it was me.

Alright. Getting a grip on myself, I called once more.

Brr, brr, brr, brr, brr... brrrrrrrrrr... brrrrrrrrrr... brrrrrrrrrr...

Hm? She's not picking up.

brrrrrrrrrr... brrrrrrrrrr... brrrrrrrrrr...

How many times did I hear that sound? Tapping my foot unconsciously, I undauntedly continued to wait for Haruna to answer.

If I cut off the call at this point, I would just feel an indescribable sense of defeat and my skull might explode.

As if I'm going to give up now!!

brrrrrrrrrr... brrrrrrrrrr... brrrrrrrrrr... click.

"Hey, is this Haruna?"

"....."

"Hellooo."

"....."

Click. Beep, beep, beep. Yup, I give up. What the hell was that just now?

Oh, right. While I'm at it, I should give Dai-sensei a call. At the very least, I had to get her to clarify when exactly she was sending me whatever she was sending me, or else it would grate on my mind.

Brr, brr, brr, brr, brr... brrrrrrrrrr... click.

"Hellooo, this is Matelis Magical Academy~."

She was talking really fast, but I immediately recognized Dai-sensei's voice.

“Ah, Dai-sensei? It’s me.”

“Ayumu-san? What’s wrong? I’m reaaaally busy right now...”

“Ah, sorry. It’s about that thing you wanted me to keep for you... I wanted to know when you are going to send that over...”

“There are a large amount of Megalo we have to take care of now, so I’m quite busy, buuut I’ll definitely send it your way eventually. Ayumu-san, it’s fine if you just don’t think about it and accept the item. Was that all you wanted?”

“Ahh, I guess.”

“Well then, let’s chat more lengthy next time theeeen~.”

Click. Beep, beep, beep.

... Why did I feel so lonely right now? Maybe I should have just held off on the phone calls.

I leaned back on my chair, and took a look around the room.

Even though school had ended at noon, there were still quite a few students left over. Tests didn’t come that frequently, so when they did they naturally stimulated conversation.

The people around me that were smiling were probably pretty happy with what had been on the test.

A single male student rushed into the classroom that was filled with an almost post-festival atmosphere. *So excitable, young folks are*, I thought as I stared at that student from afar. The student took almost all the students remaining in the classroom with him, and they left into the hallway.

Nobody had taken their book bags, so it didn’t seem like they had gone home.

Did something happen? I had a bad feeling about this... creases formed on my brow.

“Really noisy, aren’t they?”

Acting in concert with my words, Orito stood up.

“I’m going to go check it out.”

Having had his curiosity stoked, Orito headed for the hall. But the minute I saw him go out, all of a sudden he came tumbling right back to my seat with the agility of a ninja.

“Aikawa!”

His breathing was ragged. Did something really happen right after the test that got him so excited?

“Sera-san came!”

“... Huhhh?” Sounding stupid and flustered was easier than I had imagined.

“Aikawa, did you call her?”

Well, I had tried, but Haruna had put a stop to that. Or so I had thought. My eyes widened and I turned to look at the classroom door.

The students who had crowded near the classroom entrance parted to the side, and a beautiful ponytailed girl walked into the room. Her sleeveless turtleneck and jeans naturally stood out like a sore thumb amongst the sea of school uniforms. So it can’t be helped that she would attract attention. But, even before that, she was just a beauty that would easily turn your eyes. With her supple body, it was hard to prevent your breath from catching or your eyes from staring.

Thinking that I could smell her sweet scent wherever she walked, I unconsciously stuck out my nose and sniffed.

Just like Orito did.

Almost as if they were watching a golf game, the high school students surrounded Sera at a distance as she calmly walked

forward with her ponytail swish-swishing behind her.

Perhaps she was used to the response that she was getting, or perhaps she just didn't care, but Sera just continued towards me with a commanding air.

Now that I looked closely, I saw that she was holding a bento box. The moment she stood in front of me, she thrust the bento box in front of my face.

"Ayumu, Haruna entrusted me to send this to you."

I should have already told Haruna, that I didn't need a bento today. She seriously didn't listen to a word other people said, did she?

"You honestly came all the way here just to give me a bento box?"

"No... it was on the way."

"On the way?"

"An old friend of mine is here at this school."

Oh? She was friends with an ordinary human?

Or no, there might be a vampire ninja hiding incognito here at school. I mean, a zombie was coming to school, after all.

Following that logic, it's possible a masou shoujo might be here at school as well. If I was going to receive something that Haruna didn't know about, it might be at school.

I took the bento box with both hands.

"Oh, yes, Haruna wanted me to tell you something. 'You can't eat my cooking? Die. You're disgusting.' ... That was her message."

It wasn't that I didn't want to eat her cooking, just that I didn't need to have her cook for me today... but I see, I didn't tell her that.

Also... that last "you're disgusting" definitely didn't come from Haruna, but was just something you tacked on yourself, wasn't it?

But I restrained myself from saying anything like that.

I couldn't put her in a bad mood right now. She actually came here, so I should ask her to bring me home. What a time-saver. Haruna's misunderstandings could be helpful once in a while too.

"Well then, I'll take my leave..."

I called out to Sera as she began to leave the room.

"Sera, you got here at a good time. Let's go home together. I don't have any more classes today."

At my words, Sera stopped in her tracks and turned just her head towards my way. Her eyes were filled with disdain.

"... You didn't have classes, but you made me bring you your lunch?"

"Tell that to Haruna." I gave a glance in Orito's direction, and whispered into Sera's ear.

"I can't go home by myself at this time of the day. I don't care if you drag me back... just please."

Sera pushed my face away with her hand.

"I understand." She spoke in a somewhat casual tone.

"Alright... then let me also go with you--"

Orito raised his hand in the air as he timidly spoke.

"Don't come."

"Hey hey, Aikawa, that's not fair! Just because you live with her..."

"W-Whaaaaaattt?!?!?!"

The spectators let out a unified yell that would surprise the most skilled of boy's choirs. In no time, all eyes were focused on us. Chiefly, on Sera.

... This is what I've been afraid of all along. I was a cowardly zombie, after all. I wanted to live out my school days without inciting any strange rumors about myself.

Because of Orito's extraordinary declaration, now I would be labeled as the guy who had a reaaaally pretty oneechan5 living with me at home, wouldn't I?

Orito grabbed me by the shoulders and violently shook me.

"Hey, Aikawa... there's Sera, but also Yuu and Haruna... how the hell did you manage to meet so many beautiful girls?!"

He deliberately yelled in my face, his eyes filling with tears and spittle flying from his mouth. With the glassy eyes of a dead fish, I nonchalantly responded.

"Yuu came because I managed to seduce her, Haruna fell out of the sky, and Sera just appeared in my house one day."

"Are you an idiot?"

"... Yeah, probably."

I was just telling him the bare truth, but... well, in Orito's position, I probably would have responded the same way.

"I was trying to protect Yuu, when Haruna suddenly made me exterminate monsters, and then before I knew it Sera came to protect Yuu."

I threw in that follow-up to see what would happen.

"Aikawa, you're gross."

"... Yeah, probably."

No matter how you thought about it, the story was just absurd. There's no way people would believe me. In fact, it wouldn't be surprising if people thought I was delusional. Such an outrageous, true story would just go unbelieved and would probably just eventually vanish.

“You’re seriously gross. To think you can eat together with Sera-san every day... seriously... you... why at your house?!?!”

You really don’t need to cry... resisting the urge to tear off that spiky, spiteful head of his, I quickly packed my textbooks, and began to leave the classroom with Sera’s hand in mine.

“Hey, wait, Aikawa!”

As if I would. Zombies shied away from attention and sunlight, no matter how little.

“Ayumu, there really isn’t any need to be in such a hurry, is there?”

“Sera, are you really alright with this? Everyone’s staring.”

“Ahh. I’d really like to tear them all limb from limb, but if I pay them any attention that would just attract more attention.”

That’s true. Also, you would attract attention no matter where you went. I took a deep breath, ruffled my hair, and calmed myself down.

“Phew.... Hey, Sera. Could I ask you something?”

“What?”

“How long do you think you can stay at my house?”

“... Until my task is completed, I suppose?”

“I see.”

Right now, my house was a giant mixing pot of bishoujo and I was happy with that. To the point where I wanted to stay like this forever... but how long could we really stay like this?

At one point, I had a more pessimistic view and complained about all of us having to live together, but that would end at some point.

At some point, it would really end...

“Well, with Hellsythe-dono as she is, it doesn’t seem like anything

will move forwards at present.”

Sera looked somewhat disheartened, and gave a quick snort of laughter. Sera was ordered to get Yuu and help her revive the vampire ninja chief, and that’s why she was living with us. If Yuu actually felt like doing what Sera asked her to do, at that point Sera would return to the ninja village.

If... If that really happened, what would I do?

Almost as there was a daimyo procession going through, or a professor starting his daily inspection, Sera walked serenely and confidently through the students lined up against both walls, and I trudged after her. Next to me, a spiky head ran past like a hurricane.

“Sera-san! It’s been a while!”

Orito was within arm’s length of her, and threw his words at her with a smile.

But, he got no response.

“Ahh, but you look quite beautiful today too!”

“.....”

Not losing heart, he continued to toss words at her, but Sera wouldn’t play catch.

“Ah, on that quiz show that was on TV yesterday-“

“An annoying fly in May, aren’t you?”⁶

That was a pretty cryptic way to put it, but it was the inevitable response.

“Fly? Where? I’ll knock it down for you!”

She’s talking about you, so I don’t think you can knock it down. But also, don’t underestimate the agility of flies.

Perhaps partially because of this bespectacled, excited guy next to us, people were definitely staring at us strangely.

Even then, Sera paid them absolutely no mind and headed out of the school building. She was walking a bit faster than usual... probably because Orito was so annoying.

I put my shoes into the shoebox and stood stock still.

Because, there wasn't a single sliver of shade between here and the school gate. If I took a step out of the building, there was a possibility that this first stretch would leave me wriggling around like a fish out of water, and ultimately I would collapse. That was the first obstacle.

But even if I got past that obstacle, there was the challenge of waiting under the blazing sun for a traffic light to turn green. I feel like I'm going to faint before I even go outside.

I looked up at the sky, wondering what I should do.

"Aikawa, we're leaving you behind!"

Orito called out to me. The two of them didn't seem to show any signs of wanting to wait for me, and walked towards the school gate.

I had to go. Sometimes... sometimes, you just had to do what you had to do!

Steeling myself, I covered my head with my hands like a boy venturing out into a hurricane, and walked out under the sunlight.

Uooooooooooooohhh....

Uooooohhh....

Haaah..... haaaah.....

It's so hot!

This is impossible. I can't even get past the first obstacle. Before

reaching the school gate, all the power had gone out of my body.

I can't run anymore. I felt like half of my organs were screaming out at me in protest.

"What's wrong, Aikawa?"

That normal high school student, who knew nothing of the hardships of being a zombie, sounded worried for me.

The vampire ninja, who did know what I was going through, grabbed my collar and began to drag me along the ground as if she were dragging a piece of baggage. You really don't have to drag me that harshly...

Ah, no good. I can't walk. My heels ground against the floor.

Naturally, people were staring at us funny.

Ahhh... the sun is so bright...

It's been a while since I've been in direct sunlight like this... it sure is warm.

Getting a bit of sunlight once in a while might not be a bad thing.

Part 2

It seemed that I had somehow made it back home, and when I opened my eyes, I had been set in the entranceway next to the chainsaw.

My bag had been thrown off to the side, and the bento box and textbooks that were inside were in disarray. And then, it seemed that I had been thrown along with it? Listlessly getting myself to my feet, I stretched my body.

Nnnnn... alright, I guess I should put my bag in my room.

I felt really sluggish as I went up the stairs. Did sunlight seriously make me this weak? Zombies really had it tough.

I entered my room, and fished my textbooks out from my book bag.

... I'll study later. I can't study like I am now. Changing out of my uniform, I took out my favorite bento box, and tossed my bag in the direction of my desk.

Haruna had never failed in her cooking. Everyone had their own tastes, but somehow Haruna could make food that would please anyone and everyone.

And, she had gone through the trouble to make this for me, so I should take this opportunity to eat what she made.

Today's menu was... umm... hijiki⁷... and that's it.

Only hijiki?! You could've made it into konyaku or mixed in some veggies at least! This is the first time I've seen a meal consisting of hijiki and only hijiki. With all this blackness staring at me, I've really lost my will to eat... well, I'll still eat it though.

Geez... even though she wears polka-dotted panties or striped panties or panties of many other patterns, why the hell did she

make this meal so monochromatic...?

Dammit... as I expected, it's delicious too. Even though I'm not a big fan of hijiki... but still, I didn't need a whole bento box's worth of hijiki.

Right. Let's go protest to the person herself. Today I had no more school. The room I saw right after leaving mine was Haruna's room, and today she should be in there.

I'll study after this.

Taking the hijiki-covered bento box with me, I violently opened the door to Haruna's room.

"Haruna!"

... Huh?

Nobody was in Haruna's room. Apart from mealtimes and when she's thinking up some underhanded scheme, she usually shut herself up in her room... so that means, she's scheming something?

Or she could be watching television with Yuu and Sera.

Taking the bento box with me, I popped into the living room, where I found Sera and Yuu looking almost like housewives, both engrossed in a TV drama.

Yuu, wearing her usual armor even though she was indoors, didn't even look in my direction, but with a pen in her gauntleted hand, tapped the desk twice. When I looked at the desk, I saw a memo pad that was different from the usual detachable memos she used.

She probably had bought a new memo pad.

Welcome home.

I saw her words and was surprised.

It's just that, in the month we've been living together, this was the first time she's said that to me. And seeing her greeting, I felt

happy.

It's just as if... yeah...

-

It's just as if we were a family.

-

Unconsciously, a smile broke through across my face. Greetings like that were things to be treasured.

Kneeling on the ground, Yuu looked up at me. Her eyelids that never blinked, slowly descended over her eyes. And then, they opened again, and her blue eyes gazed at me.

She was probably waiting for a response.

"I'm home. Have you seen Haruna?"

I sat down cross-legged and set the bento box on the table, throwing my brightest smile at Yuu. But with a speed that had always escaped my comprehension, Yuu turned away from me.

Huh? Why?

"If you're looking for Haruna, she's gone out."

The ponytailed beauty sitting across from me gave me a light response. When she gave a glance in my direction, she had her curved index finger placed quite attractively on her lips.

"Where did she go?"

"I do not know." *Cough*. Sera cleared her throat. "When I got back, she was already-" *cough cough*. She seemed to be coughing in order to deliberately hide something.

This girl... what was she trying to hide?

"Yuu didn't hear anything either? Well, I'm at a loss then. If I can't talk to her when I want to talk to her, then I'm going to forget what

I wanted to say in the first place.”

Her silver hair reflected the light in the room... hm? It almost feels like she's turned even farther away from me.

I've heard nothing. = “Nnn~, I don't nyowww~.”

Yuu wrote on her memo pad with her back turned towards me. I felt lonely, so I translated her words into a much cuter version in my head.

She was now tapping on the desk, probably because she thought I had not read the memo yet. Why exactly was she facing away from me?

Oh. Maybe, that time when I called home the third time... maybe at that point, Haruna had already left somewhere, and Yuu had been the one who answered the phone?

And Sera had been trying to send me the bento box. Now the fact that the phone rang so long before anyone picked up, and the fact that the phone call got cut off without the other side saying anything all made sense.

Why the hell would you pick up a phone if you couldn't talk? Yuu could be an idiot sometimes too.

I shook my head from side to side in resignation.

“That idiot, where the hell did she disappear off to? Geez-“

It was probably because we were gossiping about her, but right then I heard the front door open, the sound of someone ascending the steps, and then the sound of someone coming down the steps.

“Ayumu's back, isn't he?! That idiot! Hentai!”

That was the first thing she said upon coming into the living room.

I leaned back and turned just my head towards her, and there I saw Haruna, wearing a short plaid-patterned skirt.

Her wearing a skirt was unusual. Was it a school uniform or something?

But she came here at just the right time. I showed Haruna the hijiki-filled bento box and called out to her.

“Haruna-“

“As I thought! You went into my room, didn’t you?!”

Ahh, now that I think about it, I had forgotten to shut the door.

Haruna looked down at me, and froze.

In a slightly teasing way, I spoke.

“Haruna, I can sort of see your panties.”

If I said that, Haruna would start blushing, and like always would squeal like a seal, but...

“Ahah hahaha, ahahahaha!”

What the hell was she laughing at? She clutched her chest and her ahoge jumped back and forth.

“What the hell... that face... that’s terrible! Nyaha hahahaha!”

“Face?”

“Go look in a mirror! Oh God... hahahahaha!”

“By the way, that was not me. That hedgehog of a man did it.”

I assume he was trying to make us laugh.

Mirror... hedgehog of a man... laugh.

There could only be one thing those keywords suggested.

This was probably also the reason Yuu wouldn’t look at me, and why Sera was coughing and trying to hide something from me!

I hurried to a bathroom, and looked in a mirror.

On my face, I saw some terribly low-quality scribbling, the kind you'd find in a junior high school textbook. On my forehead was written the kanji for "nothing," and there were red pen marks coming from the corner of my mouth, as if I was spitting up blood. Around my eyes and all over my temple, there had been scribbled things that looked like they belonged on a Kabuki⁹ actor.

On my cheek there was a speech bubble drawn with "No, don't be absurd!" written in it.

Didn't you normally write the kanji for "meat" on the forehead?¹⁰

Using the washing foam Sera had bought, which allegedly was made from the same stuff they made charcoal with and could wash all the dirtiness from your pores, I washed my face.

I was going to definitely smack Orito tomorrow. No, that wasn't enough. After I tortured him, I was going to pulverize that thing mercilessly, and then boil that thing in an iron pot.¹¹ His glasses, that is!

Feeling refreshed, I returned to the living room, when I saw that Sera was eating my bento box that had been filled with nothing but hijiki. My mouth hung open, and I was left slightly stunned.

To think this dignified being would steal my food...

"Sera, that was mine."

"Don't worry about it. I like hijiki."

Ah, I see. That's good then. It wasn't like I could get the box back, so I sat cross-legged down on the floor with a towel draped across my neck. Even *I* thought I looked like an old man or something.

"Hey hey, is it good?"

Haruna seemed to really want an opinion. Well, no, she wanted to be praised. She rested her head in her hands, gazing at Sera with a happy smile while her ahoge waved back and forth.

“... In its own way.”

Sera was uncooperative. She was probably jealous of how good Haruna was at cooking. She admitted Haruna's skills, but didn't want to praise her for them.

“In its own way... and what?”

Haruna seemed unsatisfied with just that answer. Sera was honestly saying that she thought it was delicious, but Haruna seemed dead-set on getting her to say it outright.

“The gloomy necromancer can have some too. Just go ahead.”

Huh? It wasn't mine?

Is it really alright? = “It's not oniichan's?”

Haruna angrily glared at me.

“Just go ahead.” Her words dripped with annoyance.

Why is she looking at me like that? Was she that angry that I had gone into her room?

“Hey, Haruna, where did you go off to exactly?”

“School.”

“..... Huh?”

“What are you so confused about? I'm a student.”

“No no... which school did you go to?”

“Which... obviously Matelis Magical Academy, right?”

Normally, Haruna never wore skirts. It seemed that this plaid-patterned skirt was something the magical academy had assigned. Hmm... she looks good in a skirt, doesn't she? She should wear skirts more often. I tried to lift her skirt up, but she punched me. It wasn't a special skill or anything. She just simply hit me with her fist. It was a superficial attack.

“I’ve never seen you as the type of person who diligently went to class.”

Maybe she was moved by how hard I had studied, and got motivated to go to class herself...

“I stopped in class for no more than two seconds... seriously, what’s so fun about going to class?”

Nope, I was wrong.

“So, what did you go to do then?”

“I was just called over for a meeting. They told me that Megalo are appearing in large quantities in this region. I would have hunted them all down anyways though, so it’s not like they had to call me into a meeting.”

Megalo appearing in large quantities. Dai-sensei had said something similar. She was talking about this region?

... Wait, she was talking about this region?! Give me a break, dammit.

“I see. And also, it seems that you can return to Virie now?”

That’s good, that’s good. But before I could continue, Haruna gave me an angry look.

“... No, I can’t! Just give me back my magical energy already!”

At her words, Yuu gave a start.

Haruna seemed to still be under the impression that I had stolen her magical energy. However, I had deduced that the one who really had stolen her energy was Yuu.

Haruna, I want some snacks = “Hey hey, Yuu is hungryyy~~.”

So Yuu wanted to change the subject.

“Should I make some then?”

With some hijiki still remaining in her mouth, Sera made that proposal. She might have bad manners, but her expression showed absolutely no slack. But... her suggestion was implicitly, unanimously vetoed. We really didn't even need to say it out loud.

"Why... isn't anyone saying anything?"

"I guess there's no helping it then. What do you want to eat?"

Having been ignored not only by me and Yuu, but even by Haruna, Sera was shocked.

Christian Bale¹² = "Ummmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm...."

That's quite an extravagant actor to be picking for a snack. I really couldn't translate that noun to a cute version in my head. The Yuu translator in my brain was completely confused.

She's trying to tell us what kind of snack she wants, right? No matter how much I thought about it, I had no idea what she was trying to say.

But...

"Cream puff?" Haruna made that suggestion, and Yuu nodded.

What the hell, are you a pro cryptographer or something?

"OK. But we seem to be out of granulated sugar. Alright, I'll put in an order for ingredients, so just wait a second... Ayumu, your cell phone."

"Here you go." I passed her my cell phone, but also...

"Hey, exactly where do you always get your ingredients from?"

It was a question I had always had on my mind.

"Are you an idiot? I get supplied with them."

It seemed that it had been decided that she would get supplied with food. Looking at me as if I were an idiot, her ahoge seemed to

droop.

Well, it's true that Haruna had come to this world to exterminate monsters, so it makes sense that she would be provisioned with the necessary materials to do so.

And the reason her food was so strangely delicious might have been because she wasn't using ingredients from this world.

"Although, it doesn't seem quite worth it if you're exterminating Megalo and they're just paying you in hijiki."

"Huh? What the hell? You have a job because you need to eat, right? What do you need other than that? What would satisfy you then? Would you be satisfied if you hit the Pajero in a game of darts¹³?"

"Probably more than hijiki, at least."

"But Ayumu, this hijiki is really quite good. Probably, even better than that Pajero..."

Sera put on a serious expression and audibly swallowed.

"You, you have no idea what a Pajero is, do you?"

A black singer.

... Where the hell did the "pa" go off to?¹⁴

Part 3

With Tuesday, and then Wednesday passing, today was Thursday, July 6th. The tests were going well.

Hmm, how smooth things were going was probably a result of all my studying, wasn't it? I felt like I could just slightly empathize with those honor students that just studied all day.

It really was a refreshing feeling to have everything going your way.

I had finished the final exam without incident, and I was enjoying the remaining time.

No matter how many times I looked over my answers, I couldn't see a mistake. I really might have gotten a perfect score here. I tried to snooze until Sera came to pick me up, but I was too excited and couldn't fall asleep.

At times like this, maybe I should just leave everything up to the sun.

The teacher and the students were all silent, and even the sound of wind was nowhere to be found in this silent classroom. If I let in some sunlight, I could just comfortably lose consciousness.

I opened the curtains just a bit, prepared to welcome that poetically beautiful summer sky, but the minute I parted the curtains I forgot all of that.

I quickly closed the curtains.

Because on the other side of the window, Haruna was clinging to the pane.

What the hell? And why did she have the chainsaw with her?

Tap tap. It sounded like she was tapping on the window. But I ignored her.

... No, wait... if she starts hitting the window harder, people are going to notice. Ignoring her didn't seem to be a good idea here.

So without any other option, I turned my test sheet over and wrote **What do you want?** on it, and turned towards Haruna.

“Ayumu! A Megalo appeared! Let's go!”

I could hear an energetic voice from the other side of the window. Don't be so loud, dammit. Someone's going to notice. No, people probably already have noticed.

I knew all too well that she didn't care about the situation I was in.

To her, there wasn't a sliver of value in this test I was taking that would affect my future. And really, she couldn't care less about this classroom or the students around me, and really didn't even really care about this entire world.

You go on ahead.

And the minute I wrote that and showed it to Haruna, the bell rang.

Alright, now I can deal with Haruna.

I turned in my test, and hurriedly turned my head towards the other side of the curtain.

But nobody was there anymore. She really went ahead and left first.

And also, I had not a shred of any idea as to where she went off to. Well, whatever, I guess I'll just leave it alone.

... Am I an idiot? She can't deal with a Megalo by herself as she is right now.

Even though she had come to this world to fight the Megalo, she didn't have the power to defeat them. I couldn't just leave her be.

“Aikawa, did you hear something funny a bit before?”

Orito sent me a questioning glance, but I didn't have time to explain.

“Ahh, there was a huge cat.”

Orito responded with a bewildered “Huh?” but I ignored him, instead taking out my cell phone and dialing home.

Brr, brr, brr, brr, brr... brrrrrrrrrrr... brrrrrrrrrrr. Click.

“Ah, this is Aikawa.”

From the response I got to that, I would know who I was talking with. I heard the clear, flowing voice of a girl.

“Is this Sera?”

“Ayumu? If you want to be picked up, Haruna already went.”

“Ahh, she did come, but I took my eyes off her and she went off somewhere. Sera, can you feel where the Megalo is?”

“I cannot. Please wait a bit. I'll ask Hellscythe-dono.”

“Ahh, please.”

With the phone to my ear, I exited out into the hallway, and quickly started to leave the school building.

“Hm? Aikawa, are you going to the bathroom?”

Orito followed me. He was annoying, but I've found that it was counterproductive to treat him coldly, so with an apologetic expression...

“Ah, no, something urgent came up. I'm going back early.”

“Eh? Hey! Aikawa, your book bag-“

Even though Orito was calling out to me from behind, I ignored him and broke out into a run.

Leaping down the stairs, I went out into the first floor hallway, opened a window and exited the school building.

“Ayumu, I’ll guide you to where Haruna is.”

“Ahh, please.”

Leaning my back against the school building, I stuck to the shadows as I proceeded. There wasn’t a single shadow near the field or gate, so I had to go behind the school and exit out onto a narrow alleyway. If I tried to go out towards the main road, I would be incapacitated before I knew it.

“Where are you right now?”

“Exactly opposite the school gate, on the north side.”

“Please proceed straight that way.”

“Unfortunately, I can’t go straight. I need to take a detour and head north.”

“Understood. Hellscythe-dono wants me to relay a message.”

“What?”

“Hurry... she says.”

“... Understood.”

Making sure that there were no witnesses nearby, I bent my knees. Then, stooping down and springing to the side, I began to run.

Part 4

They were standing under the summer sky, on a road wedged between apartment buildings. Right in the middle of a road without any signs. And in this normal residential district, somewhere you would expect to find children playing catch, there stood a conspicuous monster wearing a boy's school uniform and a chestnut-haired young girl. I had finally found them.

Haruna was wearing a dressing gown consisting of just a shirt and her underwear, and no matter how tattered her clothing had become, she wouldn't stand down. She seemed to have been on the receiving end of a lot of blows, and was repeatedly launching her own ineffective attacks.

So the Megalo she had made her opponent looked like he was having a good time with it.

“Umaaa.”¹⁵

It was a huge, grey horse whose size easily exceeded three meters. It was wearing a boy's school uniform, so it was easy for me to guess that this was a Megalo.

The horse didn't neigh even once. It seemed to have mistaken “umaaa” as the sound a horse makes.

Haruna sent a huge swing at the horse, and just by pulling his body back a bit the horse was able to evade the attack.

“Umaaumaamaa.”

The horse sneered at Haruna. Haruna's face was warped with frustration.

The horse's hands bore no fingers, but instead ended in hooves. With just a small push, Haruna was sent rolling away like a ball. Even then, the determined Haruna soon stood right back up, and

swung the chainsaw once again. But the chainsaw in this state was nothing more than a normal blunt weapon, and the horse just took the attack right on.

He didn't even flinch. Haruna seemed shocked and her eyes widened, but she didn't give up and sent the chainsaw flying again and again into the horse.

The reason Haruna's attacks were meaningless was not that she couldn't transform into a masou shoujo.

Rather, when Haruna saw a Megalo in front of her, her strength would suddenly leave her. She became exhausted to the point where she couldn't even stand, to the point where she clunked down onto the floor.

If she attacked in that condition, there's no way her attacks would have any effect.

But, Haruna didn't give up.

Her pride wouldn't allow her to.

"Umaa."

A purple aura burst out of his huge nostrils. Being hit with the poisonous air, Haruna began to shake.

"You... bastard..."

Almost as if all the strength had left her lower half, Haruna tried to prop herself up with the chainsaw, but ended up plopping down onto the ground. Her cheeks were flushed, and a sweet breath escaped her lips.

At last, she let go of the chainsaw. She trembled and shook her head, desperately trying to retain her grip on consciousness, but her ahoge had already lost all its vitality.

The horse traced Haruna's soft skin with his hooves. The horse's eyes filled with lust, and his breathing became ragged. Circling around, the horse sent one of his hooves inside Haruna's dress...

Well, at that point, I had managed to sneak up behind him, and with the intention of tearing it off, I latched onto and pulled on his mane. Clouds had finally covered the sun from view.

“Ayu... mu...?”

Haruna’s empty eyes seemed to have trouble grasping the situation. The weird aura that the horse had emitted might have had a thought-clouding effect.

I kicked the horse flying with all my might, and turning towards Haruna, I lightly lifted up my right arm.

“Hey, fancy seeing you here. I came to exterminate a Megalo, but what exactly are you doing here?”

“Hueh? Ahh...”

“Hey, are you alright?”

I snatched the chainsaw away from Haruna, and with it, aimed around the face and cut upwards. Because right there was the hate-filled face of the horse, and my attack slammed upwards into his jaw. I elbowed him, and extended my hand as if I were performing a backhand chop. Waiting for the right time, I spun around once and again sent an attack up into his jaw.

With her hair completely disheveled and her ahoge suddenly bouncing up, Haruna suddenly took a deep breath.

“Ayumu! Get here faster next time!”

Well, she seems fine. That’s great.

“I seriously didn’t think you would really go off by yourself.”

“Even if I’m by myself... even if he’s no match for me... I have to do it. I...”

I was about to apologize to Haruna as she showed me a lonely expression, but the horse had put his hooves onto the asphalt and was rushing towards us, so there was no time.

The sun hadn't set yet, so it didn't seem my human-limit-breaking attacks were very effective. I had intended to kill him, but the horse still seemed quite sure of himself.

Alright, what should I do?

Did I really have to become a masou shoujo? Honestly, I never wanted to change into that outfit again.

“Hey! Come on, transform! Your opponent is an AA-class Megalo... the Terrifying Kneecap, Wanderlei Siuma!¹⁶”

When more purple smoke erupted from the horse's nostrils, Haruna shivered in terror.

Ahh, I'm wasting time here... it really seemed that I had to transform.

Fine, fine. I have to transform. In a very slovenly way, I began to chant.

“Nomobuyo, woshi, hashitawa, dokeda, gunmiicha, dei, ribura!”

My school uniform flew off, and an embarrassing full-cosplay costume wrapped around my body. As if not wanting to wait for the transformation to finish, the horse came attacking with both his hooves thrust out in front of him.

While spinning, I flowed past him and took his back. I exited the shadows, entering a spot that was exposed to direct sunlight.

Alright, even under the sun, I could move around as expected. I couldn't use my abilities as a zombie, but I had more than enough energy left to fight with. As expected from a masou shoujo. Like this, I couldn't lo-

Kyah...

Suddenly expelling the entire contents of my lungs, I danced in midair with my mouth open.

There was a hoof mark carved into my chest. With a force stronger

than anything I had ever experienced, the attack had crushed my lungs.

When I took a look, I saw the horse had his head raised, had his forelegs on the ground, and had kicked up with his hind legs.

I had been kicked with a horse's kick.

That was an insane amount of power. If I were just a normal masou shoujo, I probably would have died.

Amongst strong warriors, it was common knowledge that you should move behind your enemy when you're given the chance. He deliberately lured me into going behind him by launching such a magnificently avoidable attack.

"Uma? Umaaaii."

"What? You're still alive? Well, whatever," he seemed to be saying... or maybe...

"You're a guy? Well, whatever." That could have been the nuance he was going for. Whichever it was, this horse's face was quite expressive.

He turned the left side of his body towards me, while lifting his right hoof towards his cheek. Coming closer, he feinted with a left jab. If I let down my guard even a bit, he would probably send a right straight punch my way. This was an unpleasant situation to be in.

But, because I still had the chainsaw, I had him on reach.

Lifting the chainsaw with both hands above my head, I shuffled around and looked for an opening.

The sunlight streaming down at us scorched the atmosphere. Collecting that light, the chainsaw began to glow a ruby color. The chainsaw teeth spontaneously began to turn, and rather than the sound of an engine, gave out a high-pitched shriek.

The horse went around me and cut in. I decided to ignore his left

jab in this case. Together with his huge attack with his right hand, I'll counterattack him with all my might.

And after that, I'll just follow that up with more and more attacks.

As if I'd lose to you. If you want to compete with me, you should've brought half a dozen friends.

Granted, if I were at full strength right now, I would be able to pin him down with one attack. Dammit, why does it have to be noontime?

My wounds were also healing slower. It was hard to breath, probably because of the damage he had inflicted on my lungs, or maybe because of that suspicious purple aura the horse was giving off.

The horse closed the distance between us in one breath. I collected all of my strength and swung the chainsaw downwards. The chainsaw left a trail of ruby-colored light behind it.

"Ayumu!"

It took a few seconds for Haruna's voice to reach me.

Feeling strangely as if time had slowed down around me, I glared at the horse in front of me.

The horse's huge body slipped to the side. I was expecting that. I had swung the chainsaw diagonally. The chainsaw gradually turned more and more sharply and followed the horse's motions.

The horse, in a forward-bent posture, stretched out his hand as if preparing for a backhand chop. Too late. Before his attack could reach me, my chainsaw reached him.

The same time the chainsaw began to carve into the horse, his left jab collided with my right arm.

Is he seriously just going to go on attacking in this state?

As he was getting cut down by the chainsaw, the horse repeatedly

attacked me with right straight punches. I let go of the chainsaw, and grasping his hoof with my left hand, elbowed that impertinent horse in the face with my right arm.

The horse's jaw shook, and he collapsed.

Pretty simple. Should I play with him a bit?

I confidently let this opportunity pass me by.

I was stronger than this horse. As I was drowning in this sense of superiority, I finally heard what Haruna was saying.

“Ayumu! I'm telling you to look behind you, dammit! Idiot!”

Behind me? Well for now, before I turned around I looked down. I was taking into account the possibility that I was already being attacked with something.

In the next moment, my rounded back arched back into the shape of a bow. With the shock that I received from behind me, I had no other choice.

My zombie fresh blood flew out like shrapnel, and dyed the black uniform of the horse.

My body had been pierced by something. Pierced by a pipe-looking thing that was around as thick as a human finger.

And there wasn't only one. The next one and the next one impaled through my body. A current of electricity ran through my body, and my hands and feet went numb.

My body was lifted up high, and slammed down into the ground. Dammit, I can't really move my body very well.

Aiming for my face, the horse's leg dropped down on top of me. My cheek scraped against the asphalt as I was trampled by that horse's hooves.

Every fiber of my being was seething with anger, but I couldn't shake off the numbness in my limbs and do anything about it.

Right next to the horse was a jellyfish. Or maybe I shouldn't call it a jellyfish... it was a boy's school uniform wearing cnidarian.

I see, that attack had come from the jellyfish.

Now that I got a good look at it, I saw that there wasn't only one jellyfish. Five... or ten... there were still a large number of them. I remembered how I was told that Megalo had appeared in large numbers.

Not good. My consciousness was hazing over. Was it because I had taken in too much of that purple aura?

I was seriously an idiot. Why didn't I deal the finishing blow when I had the chance? I wouldn't lose anything if I gloated *after* I had won.

Crap. I couldn't die, so I wasn't worried about me, but Haruna was a different story. There's no way she could run away from this many Megalo.

Sera.... Yuu... save us. No, I don't care who it is... please, if there is a God!

I'm sure this image of a zombie begging God was pretty hilarious. Maybe God just really pitied me or something, but my prayers seemed to have been answered.

A mantle gently unfurled in front of me. It was the black mantle characteristic of vampire ninjas.

... Did Sera come to save us? She always shows up right when we're in trouble.

The jellyfish that had impaled me lost all of its strength. The vampire ninja who had alighted in front of me was a young boy I had never seen before.

"Who... are you?"

"I came to meet you."

He seemed to be more around the age of Haruna or Yuu than Sera, and there was youth left in his face. In his left hand there was... tonkotsu ramen.

Was I seeing things? Maybe it's because my head is really spinning...

No, it's pretty clear... it really was tonkotsu ramen. No matter how you looked at it, it was tonkotsu ramen.

"Hm? I..."

The boy began to look around him. It seemed like he didn't really have a solid grasp of the situation. However, when his glare fell on the jellyfish, he broke out into a run with an angry expression.

"Hyaaaaaaaaaaaaahhh!!"

With a hearty shout, this vampire ninja... sloshed the tonkotsu ramen at the jellyfish.

When he did that, the pitch-black school uniform melted away, and the jellyfish began to squirm, finally dissolving into sparkling particles.

... This can't be happening. Just by getting splashed with tonkotsu ramen...

I was seeing things, right? It wasn't tonkotsu ramen, but acid ramen, right?

The horse Megalo tried to spring on him, but a green-colored sword impaled its body. And when that horse toppled forwards, a ponytailed beauty stood on top of him.

The beauty changed tree leaves into swords, and thrusting them into the horse's face, caused the horse to writhe in agony and dispel into white particles.

Without even making sure the horse had been defeated, with her ponytail falling into disarray behind her, she began to cut down the Megalo one by one.

The ponytailed beauty changed tree leaves into shurikens and threw them.

The boy flung the tonkotsu ramen noodles that had fallen on the asphalt at the Megalo.

The ponytailed beauty cut through her enemies with her green sword.

The boy took the remaining tonkotsu soup in the bowl and splashed it at the enemies, melting them.

Like that, the Megalo were easily exterminated.

As expected from Sera. Unlike me, she was merciless even against enemies that were no match for her. As for the tonkotsu ramen thing... no comment.

“Seraphim! It’s been a while. How’ve you been?”

The boy confidently began to whack Sera on the back with a smile on his face. Perhaps because she was offended at how overly-familiar he was being, but Sera swept the boy’s feet from under him. He fell. Locking his arms in a chicken wing position, Sera spoke curtly.

“Don’t come near me please.”

“Ah! Hey! Seraphim! Uncle! Uncle dammit! Let go of me!!”



“Sera, you know this person?”

“Yeah. Well... Ayumu, are you alright?”

Sera spoke to me while holding the boy down. I stood up shakily, and dissolved my transformation.

“Thanks to that person... somehow or other. Haruna, you alright?”

“O-Of course.”

I headed towards Haruna’s direction, as she didn’t seem to be able to stand yet, and gave her a hand. And this uncooperative masou shoujo didn’t even try to take that hand. She probably couldn’t stand being saved by anyone else.

I passed the chainsaw to her, and when I turned around, I saw Sera had locked arms with the boy as if she had caught an escaping prisoner... they looked like they were stuck to each other. I was a bit jealous.

“Who is that? Let go. That’s the person who saved us, you know.”

“This is Mael Strom. Another vampire ninja, but someone who belongs to an opposing faction.”

When she let go of Mael with a firm push, Mael tottered away from her unsteadily.

I see. They were in opposing factions, which is why she reacted the way she did.

“Hm, now that I think about it, vampire ninjas also fought each other...?”

I had completely forgotten, but the reason Sera was staying in my house was because she was trying to get Yuu to revive the vampire ninja chief. I only vaguely remembered this, but she did say something about a war breaking out over who would be the successor.

“Right now, there are two factions of vampire ninjas. I am part of the conservative faction, while Mael is part of the reform faction.”

Doves and hawks, then? That seemed sort of complicated. For now, I guess I’ll just think of it as there being two types of vampire

ninjas? People who wanted to protect Yuu's life, and those who were aiming for it.

"Owwww... Seraphim! You were seriously trying to break my arm, weren't you?!"

"Well, you got to stick close to Sera, so it was worth it in the end, right?"

"Huh? What the hell was worth it?!"

Putting one of my arms around Mael, I whispered into his ear.

"Come on, when you were stuck to her earlier... and you could feel her breasts..."

The boy began to shudder and he drew his shoulders back.

"Uwaaah! D-Don't whisper in my ear!"

He raised his hand and blushed. I caught his black mantle with the hand that had been wrapped around his shoulder.

Boys are really cowardly creatures, aren't they? He was probably taking advantage of all the turmoil to stroke and go lovey-dovey over Sera's breasts. For mammals like us, breasts were a necessity of life, after all.

But... if he did that, wouldn't Sera have gotten angry?

No, for boys as young as him, there were less-defined boundaries when it came to touching girls.

Isn't youth nice? I'm seriously jealous. I just really want to strangle him to death while we're like this.

"That hurts... sto.. stop that..."

"Ayumu... the Megalo went down already, so let's go home"

Haruna clutched at my clothes. Mael grabbed my face with his hand.

“W-What the hell... you... let go, dammit. You’re sick! Are you a middle schooler or something?!”

You too, are you a middle schooler? You’re about as tall as Haruna, so... maybe an elementary schooler?

“Hey! Ayumu, you asshole! Don’t ignore me!”

For some reason, Haruna, with her ahoge sticking straight up, pushed me from behind. It was pretty much a strong thrust, and I toppled down with my arms around Mael.

“U-Uwaahh! Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaahhh!!”

You are one noisy guy. I’m the one who should be yelling here.

At that moment, everyone at that scene was shocked.

-

Somehow, I had ended up locking lips with this boy.

-

It was just one moment. It was barely more than a passing touch, but I definitely could feel something soft. If I hadn’t gotten my hand on the ground before I fell completely, it wouldn’t have just been a kiss; our teeth would have crashed into each other.

This was the worst.

Sera naturally put on a shocked expression and drew away, while Haruna’s mouth formed a triangle and she went completely red... the boy, Mael... why exactly was he blushing too?

And to think that was my first kiss... no, this doesn’t count does it?

“I-It hurts, so get your hands off me!”

Ah, crap. The soft feeling hadn’t disappeared. Yes, right now I could feel it through my palm... something soft and light.

Hm? What was with this strange extra lump of fat on this guy’s

chest...? I felt the blood draining from my face. Mael was near tears. I stood up and fell into thought.

Mael was squeezing his legs together tightly and hugging himself. Tears filled his eyes and he tried to avoid my gaze. Don't tell me, that under that black mantle there was...

“Ayumu, you hentai! Yack Deculture!”¹⁷

“If you would allow me to also...”

Haruna and Sera's kicks both ripped into my head.

Part 5

I couldn't really see very well. After that, this boy... erm, I mean girl... beat me until my face had swollen up, and right now Sera and I were following behind her. Ugh, she can really punch for a girl. Seriously, she punches like a guy.

Haruna seemed to have taken quite a shock from that kiss scene, and ran home as if trying to escape.

I started to chase after her, but it seemed that she had returned to full health, and more importantly, there was something bothering me about Mael.

This boy... erm, girl... what the hell was that tonkotsu ramen she was using? I could ask about that, right? I mean, there might be a way I could defeat Megalo without transforming.

If I could learn about that, I would be able to take care of business without ever showing everyone that unsightly cosplay outfit. I had to find out from her by any means necessary.

I don't know if rooftops were a ninja's special territory or something, but Sera and Mael both proceeded across the roof we were on soundlessly.

Not knowing how you were supposed to run across a roof at that speed without raising a sound, I followed noisily behind them.

Mael stopped, and pointed straight.

"Lately, there's been quite a lot of monsters around. Take a look."

Where she was pointing, there was a huge, bear-like thing punching a guardrail. I knew it was a Megalo from the school uniform it was wearing, but... hm? Something was off.

Ah, right. I couldn't feel even a sliver of cuteness from him. Was he

that ferocious? All the Megalo I've fought with up until now... they were more like... well, they seemed much more rational.

They had the appearance of a beast, but they overflowed with humanity... however, this Megalo was different.

This one really seemed like a monster.

So there was still a Megalo here? Hm? Haruna hadn't noticed it?

Three vampire ninjas were dealing with the Megalo, who was howling at the cloudy sky.

And in the hands of those three people, there were ramen bowls. I couldn't see very clearly from this distance, but they were probably also filled with tonkotsu ramen.

Dodging the Megalo's attacks as he waved his arms around, the vampire ninjas found an opening and attacked.

Being splashed with the tonkotsu ramen, the Megalo writhed in agony and then dissolved into particles, vanishing.

"What did they just do?"

Even Sera found that sight a bit strange. No matter how many times you looked at it, it really was profoundly strange.

"We found out that those types of monsters are weak against tonkotsu soup."

"Huh?" Even Sera didn't seem to understand Mael's statement.

"We still don't know which ingredient does it, but something in tonkotsu soup... makes those monsters melt. ¹⁸ Haha."

Was that just a pun...? Tehee. Mael shyly scratched her head, and Sera spoke to her in a merciless tone.

"Don't say worthless things like that, please."

She was cut down with a single stroke.

“So it’s effective?”¹⁹

I don’t think I will ever forget the way Sera looked at me at that moment. Her gaze was basically saying “what the hell did you just spit out?” to me, and was filled with disdain. Those were the eyes of someone who had already gone far in life.

“Effective. Ahahaha! Only effective on monsters! Surprisingly, I think I’d get along with you!”

“Well, we kissed, after all.”

“A-Are you an idiot?! That obviously didn’t count! Why the hell are you looking at me like that? That definitely didn’t count! It’s like the three-second rule when you drop bread onto the carpet! Ah, seriously, stop smirking at me!”

She was seriously easy to tease. It’s almost as if I had another Haruna.

Sera pierced the roof with a green-colored sword, so Mael and I sobered up... we wouldn’t want the family under us to have to deal with a leaky ceiling.

“But even so, those monsters are seriously strong. Even if we can deal with them with just one attack, we need at least three of us or else it’s an impossible task.”

“Even if it’s someone who’s as strong as Mael?”

“Don’t underestimate me! If it’s me, I can defeat them all by myself!”

The mischievous smile that rose up on her face also made me think of Haruna. She almost seemed like she wanted to flex her biceps, but her arms were slender.

“So, we worked out a countermeasure. Well, just follow me.”

Sera and I silently followed after Mael, who once again had broken out into a run.

Or I should rather say, if I tried to say anything Sera would just glare at me, so it wasn't possible to strike up a conversation.

Part 6

Sera and I were brought to a dilapidated building. It was so broken down, it almost looked like it was haunted.

Entering the building, we were guided to a conspicuously large room. And inside that room, which was big enough to open a convenience store, there were neither construction workers nor security guards; rather, it was filled with men and women with red eyes and black cloaks. Giving a rough count... there were around thirteen.

Being surrounded by vampire ninjas, I felt a bit nervous. I felt the room temperature drop a little.

Sera went around and greeted the others in the room, and I very meekly followed suit. I could feel rather hostile glares on us, and that was probably because all these vampire ninjas were part of the reform faction, the faction that stood in opposition to Sera's faction. If Mael weren't there, I would want to run away immediately.

"Isn't our secret base really cool?!"

Mael said something that was really like something Haruna would say.

"What's that big thing over there?"

I had noticed the bulky water tank that was set in the corner of the room. Even as a piece of interior decorating, it would have been really strange.

"This machine can manipulate the weather."

Sera muttered with a quiet expression. She glared at the water-tank-looking thing as if it was an enemy. Manipulate the weather... they had things that could do something as amazing as that?

“This is our counter strategy. Amazing, isn’t it?”

Mael turned her head up proudly. Right then, a brawny-looking guy drew close.

“Mael! Why did you bring Seraphim here?! She’s part of the conservative faction!”

Yeah, that’s right. Why did she bring someone from the opposing faction to their secret base? Mael’s face suddenly paled.

“Ahhhhh!!! I forgot she was in that faction!”

It seems that the vampire ninja known as Mael Strom was probably an idiot. Now that I think about it, she certainly had taken quite an overly-familiar attitude towards Sera, even though Sera had pinned her down.

“No, you’ve done well.”

A giant man, sitting by the side of the machine with one eye closed, spoke in a low bass tone. However I looked at him, he was a strong-looking, muscular man. He could probably star in an American movie. Allowing myself to be a bit biased here, I would say that he seemed like a man who would list proteins under his list of favorite foods.

“Seraphim, there’s something I want to ask of you.”

He clasped his hands together in front of his face and made that assertion. Sera didn’t answer, and her facial expression didn’t change. She seemed to be saying that she would listen to what he had to say, for now. Seeming fully satisfied with that answer, the thin-eyed woman with wavy hair gave her a smile.

“Seraphim. Do you already know about how there have been a large number of monsters appearing?”

“Yes.”

Sera responded simply. She’s being really cold even though they’re finally explaining the situation for us.

“Then, do you also already know that those monsters are weak against tonkotsu ramen?”

“Ah, I also heard that a little while ago. So, what’s that machine?”

Sera didn’t seem to be in the mood to listen, so trying to inject some energy in the atmosphere, I raised my hand.

“This device makes it rain tonkotsu.”

“Whaa...”

Wait, that would be a horrible bother! Just try and see what would happen if you had such greasy rain falling! Just thinking about it made my stomach churn.

“Do you really believe that their weak point is tonkotsu soup?”

“We might be able to deal with them all at once like this. It’s worth a try.”

The huge man with one eye closed responded to Sera’s question. Sera thinned her eyes and crossed her arms.

“Are you also aware that there are risks to using that device?”

The one who responded this time to Sera’s words faster than anyone was none other than me.

“Risks? Would something bad happen if you used it?”

“This device tries to change naturally occurring phenomena by force. Naturally, there can be negative effects. For example, there’s a high possibility that we could not get rain in this area for an entire year, or in contrast, we could have never-ending torrential rain fall.

If that happened, it wouldn’t just be a matter of being a bother. That would actually have effects on the ecosystem.

“There might not be any negative effects. And even if there were, it might only last for a short while. What we’re proposing is to only

have the rain fall for a single day.”

At the counterargument of the man with one eye closed, Sera shook her head in astonishment.

“You’re an idiot.” With that one utterance, Sera was trying to end this discussion. Even if they had a dispute here, nothing would be solved. Even I understood that, but this wasn’t a problem you could just ignore.

“Think of another way!”

When I spoke forcefully, the girl with her wavy hair swishing behind her gave me an expression that reminded me of a mother flustered at the selfishness of her child.

“But, you know? There are too many. We can’t deal with them properly anymore.”

As long as we can deal with the present, the future doesn’t concern us. For me, that kind of thinking was just absurd.

“But just because...” I started to talk, but I suddenly stopped.

... I was just like that. For me, it’s always been that if I could deal with the present, I’d be fully satisfied.

It wasn’t my place to reject their way of thinking. They were just trying to deal with the troubles that had befallen them by any means necessary.

But even so, I couldn’t just leave this be. What if I just destroyed this machine right now? I took a step forwards, but perhaps guessing what I was trying to do, Sera restrained me.

Her beautiful lips neared my ears, and she mumbled quietly.

“Everyone here is either just as strong as I am or above. Let’s retreat for now.”

Gritting my teeth, I whispered back “Got it.”

“I understand your aims. I wish you success.”

Sera shut her eyes, and making that final declaration that obviously rang insincere, tried to leave the room.

“Wait, Seraphim.”

Right then, the giant man with one eye closed stopped Sera. Without even turning around, Sera just sent back a single word. “What?”

“To be honest, we’ve received reports that there is someone who is trying to destroy this machine.”

He seemed to be implying that Sera had something to do with it. However, Sera did not seem the least bit perturbed.

“And?”

“Who is the assassin?”

“I do not know.”

“I see. I’m glad it isn’t you.”

“Is that all?” I was expecting the man to continue the interrogation deeper, but at that point he stopped.

“Yeah. Seraphim is idiotically honest, after all.”

A few people chuckled. Sera seemed annoyed, and opened her mouth, when...

“But, that’s one of Seraphim’s good points.”

Mael said that with a smile. Yes, I thought so too. Without saying anything, Sera shut her mouth.

“One last thing, Seraphim. Are you sure you don’t want to join our faction?”

“I do not. Goodbye.”

I thought Sera's way of answering that without any hint of hesitation was pretty cool.

Like that, we took our leave from the vampire ninja group. Sera seemed to be in a worse mood than usual, and rushed home quickly. I desperately tried to keep pace with her.

"But really, if they made tonkotsu soup rain down, the city's going to get really oily, isn't it?"

I jokingly brought up that subject.

"You shouldn't worry about that."

"Oh?"

"My superiors are thinking of some other way to deal with this situation. I still do not know the particulars, but at this point I can say this with certainty."

Sera showed me an angelic smile. She puffed out her chest almost as if her superiors' plans were her own. At that moment, she reminded me of Haruna.

"And when it comes to that device, the necessary arrangements have already been made. There is no need for Ayumu to do something rash here."

So, she was talking about the assassin that had been mentioned before? Just like Sera had been, it seemed that the vampire ninjas on Sera's side had no desire to see that device in action.

"By the way, Ayumu. You're really not taking this seriously enough."

"Hm?" Before I could ask her what she meant, Sera responded with a bit of anger.

"To vampire ninjas, a kiss marks the start of a wedding ceremony. That will not change no matter where you go. At that moment, you had finished the wedding ceremony. Do you love Mael Strom?"

“No, that’s not it...”

“If that’s the case, you should avoid her at all costs.”

It was an accident, so what could I do? But I didn’t even think of making that excuse.

Because at that moment, Sera showed me a lonely expression that reminded me of Yuu.

... Don’t make that face, dammit.

“I understand. I’ll do just that.”

“It’s good that you understand. Well, I don’t think Mael thought that what had happened counted as a marriage ceremony either. However, vampire ninjas put the law over their personal feelings.”

“So... if I kissed Sera right here, Sera would marry me?”

I was just joking, but somewhat expectedly, Sera gave me a response without hesitation.

“Yes. I would vow to love you... If at all possible, that is.”

END CHAPTER 1

Chapter 2 – No, This Isn't About Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah.



Ugh, to think people of my kind came up with an absurd plan to make oily rain fall from the sky... it makes me embarrassed as a vampire ninja.

What in the world were they thinking?

Now then, it's been quite a while since I've celebrated Tanabata.

If Haruna weren't here, I probably wouldn't have the opportunity to enjoy myself like this.

Fufu, Haruna and Hellsythe-dono sure look cute.

As I thought, girls should change their hairstyles in various ways.

After all, Hellsythe-dono could probably style her hair in many other cute ways as well.

Part 1

Friday, July 7th. Happily, tests had finally ended. I had probably gotten the best test scores I have gotten in my life. I'm pretty confident of that.

I had stopped worrying about the thing that Dai-sensei had told me she would send me. I hadn't heard any new news about that, and even if I called her I felt I wouldn't be able to get much more information out of her.

It was fine if I just assumed that she had forgotten all about it, right?

The final day of the term had a beautiful weather, with the skies painted over in grey.

Clouds sure are nice. If they blocked out the sunlight this much, I could even get home by myself. Maybe it would even rain. For the time being, I really didn't want to see the sun shine down from the heavens.

... Well, as long as it wasn't tonkotsu rain.

As I looked up at the cloudy sky, I finally arrived back at my house. I wanted to just get inside as quickly as possible, but I was stopped right in my tracks before I could walk into the entranceway.

"What the hell..."

I couldn't help but react like that. And I didn't have any intentions to close my gaping mouth. I considered the possibilities that my eyes were tired, or maybe my brain was just tired, and so I rubbed my eyes and took a few deep breaths.

I once again looked up.

However, the strange sight I was looking at did not become any less

strange. Reality was honestly even more bizarre than zombies were.

I went into the house and bound up the stairs.

And then, without even a knock, without even a word of warning, I opened the door to Haruna's room.

"Hey! What the hell?! Don't barge in so damn suddenly!"

All she was wearing was a camisole and a pair of silk white panties with ribbons on the sides. And caught in such a vulnerable state, Haruna flushed red.

"You damn Eroic Age!²⁰ Get. The. Hell. Out!!"

I completely ignored Haruna's furious shouts as she wrapped herself up in one of her bed-sheets. Instead, I yelled right back, and even louder.

"This is your doing, isn't it?!"

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

"Where the hell did that thing on the veranda come from?!"

I pointed in the direction of Sera's room, and finally Haruna seemed to catch on. "Ahh, that."

"Where... well, it came from the mountains, obviously."

"Why the hell is it here?!"

"Ah, Ayumu doesn't know? Man, you're pretty behind. I learned that today's Tanabata, you see..."²¹

Tanabata? Oh, I see.

"Come with me!"

I took Haruna's hand and headed towards Sera's room. Haruna tried to hide her underwear and resisted, but I pulled with all my strength.

“Wait! Ayumu? Hueh?”

Sera’s room was originally where my parents slept, so you could get to the veranda through that room.

And on the veranda, instead of a pole for drying clothes, there were huge bamboo plants sprouting up.

It was as if we were being invaded by bamboo aliens or something... it honestly wouldn’t be too far-fetched to say that.

Was there supposed to be one for each of us or something? Four bamboo plants were tearing through the veranda floor, and sprouting up vertically.

What’s more, they were decorated with lights and in general looked incredibly gaudy for bamboo.

“I get that it’s Tanabata, but clean all this up.”

“Why?!”

“Because don’t you think all this is really strange?!”

“What is?”

Her ahoge tilted to one side. As if it were trying to say “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

Granted, it’s not like I didn’t sympathize with her desire to decorate for Tanabata. And I can even forgive the lights.

But, I mean, to put a star at the top and to decorate it with puffs of cotton²²... no matter how you thought about it, she was half a year too early. And when I tried to explain that to her...

“Ayumu just doesn’t know what’s trendy right now.”

Haruna let out an annoying little breath of carbon dioxide and shrugged her shoulders.

“Tanabata... a river of stars flows across the sky, and at that time, a

man of legend comes, accompanied by two beasts. He wears clothes dyed red with the blood of his enemies, and carries a huge, man-sized bag. Under the cover of night, he steals into the houses that are decorated by bamboo trees. And then, with his sudden-death move Thunder Cross²³, he grants wishes to just the people who have ponytails... it's a pretty famous story."

I see. Haruna seemed to have mixed up Santa Claus with Hikoboshi²⁴.

"So, why bamboo then?"

"... It's what he eats, right?"

I see. Santa turned into a panda.

Oh, wait... actually, it's possible that reindeer actually did eat bamboo.

Part 2

So, that's how we ended up writing all our feelings down on tanzaku.²⁵

Haruna's version of Santa, for not one good reason whatsoever, seemed to limit his attention to people with ponytails, so everyone had tied up their hair.

Of course, Sera had a ponytail to begin with, so she didn't have to change a thing.

Yuu, who had her waist-length hair done into a ponytail, did seem a bit more relaxed than usual.

Or rather, seeing her like that definitely made me more relaxed, so having the impression that she was as well was probably just an illusion.

Haruna had forced her shoulder-length chestnut hair into a small ponytail, and I'll hand it to her that she was pretty cute too.

Even for Haruna, who was usually lacking in sex appeal, seeing the back of her neck exposed like that was quite charming.

As for me...

"Ayumu, that look really works for you."

Why did she say that without even looking at me?

Sera looked a few times in my direction and snorted with laughter. Well, it's not like I can do anything about it. I don't have as much hair as you people.

Sera placed a felt-tipped pen on her elegant lips, and seemed to be thinking about what to write. Ugh, she laughed again.

"Ayumu, that look really works for you."

“Ahh, thanks.”

It was a smile dripping with sarcasm.

“Alright, something like this!”

Haruna held up her tanzaku. However, she frowned and glared at it, and seeming not happy with it, soon crumpled it up and threw it into the trashcan. Over the past few minutes, she had already done that a few times.

I picked up one of her rejections and uncrumpled it. The wish that was written on it was...

A heart that loves peace... I guess?

That was pointlessly cool-sounding... why did she ask it like a question? Wishes were a more one-sided thing, weren't they? Wasn't she really good when it came to things like that? Did she not already have a heart that loved peace?!

As I was thinking that, I opened up another rejection. Yuu seemed to show some interest as well, and leaned both her body and her silver-haired ponytail over as she peeked at what was written.

The Monster Killer of Koshien (Long sword)²⁶

What the hell was that? Something like the Dragon Killer?²⁷ Did Santa inherit that or something?

Yuu seemed to regret ever looking over, and returned both her body and her eyes to the television.

“Hey! What are you doing?! Don't look! The wishes won't come true if other people read them!”

There was a rule like that? Alright, if Haruna decided that, then let's look through them all right away.

“Don't wish for weird things. At least ask for something that exists in this-“

Two taps on the table interrupted my words, so while I still hadn't finished my sentence with the word "world," I took a look at Yuu's memo.

Why does she want to kill the monster of Koshien?

I guess Yuu just couldn't help having that on her mind.

"The gloomy necromancer doesn't know? If you beat the monster that lives at Koshien, kouka²⁸ flows out, you know?"

Oh hoh, so instead of blood, a school song flows out... no, or was I getting the words for "school song" and "coin currency" mixed up? Ugh, this is getting complicated and I can't keep things straight anymore. Who was it? Who the hell told you that?

Sera covered her mouth and seemed to be enjoying herself, letting out a single chuckle. Surely, the source of all this evil couldn't be this vampire ninja, could it?

"Ugh, whatever! Enough about me! Hey, Ayumu, go faster! Everyone's waiting for you right now!"

I see... waiting for me, huh... well then, I'll just go with something half-assed, like "I wish that my nail-clippers will always stay sharp."

Actually, wait. It's not like that wish would come true. And then, I'm sure Haruna would make a fuss about it and go "That's definitely not coming true! Are you screwing with me?!" or something.

Alright, then let's make my wish this:

I wish that none of the wishes will come true.

Like this, even if Haruna made a fuss and yelled "It's not coming true!" I can just respond sarcastically with "Well, mine would come true first." Ahh, just thinking about how flustered Haruna is going to get is enough to make me smile.

"Ayumu, what's wrong? That look really works for you, you know?"

What look?! The ponytail? Or rather, the fact that I'm smiling right now?

What is Ayumu wishing for? = "Hey hey, what did oniichan write? Show Yuu, show Yuu!"

Unlike her usual hairstyle, Yuu had done her silky silver hair up into a ponytail, but her expression was as emotionless as ever. But I could have sworn that I saw the depths of her eyes overflowing with curiosity. To understand what Yuu was thinking on the inside, it was enough to gaze into her eyes.

"It's a secret. Well, I'm sure you'll find out about it soon."

I gave her a smile and tried to sound deep. It was already pretty set in stone that Haruna was going to complain about this.

I had finished writing what I wanted to write, and it seemed that I was being an eyesore to Sera, so I started to untie my ponytail.

"Hey Ayumu! The ceremony hasn't even started yet!"

Wait... since when did Tanabata has a ceremony?

Sera also seemed to have finished writing, and was busy trying to watch the television with Yuu, but Haruna just kept on crying out things like uwah!, nyah!, gunyah!... almost as if she were having a nightmare.

"Just hurry up. I want to take a bath."

"Just go when we finish the ceremony! You can't even sit still for a second?! This is why the digital age is so...!"

"Yeah, yeah. So, what kind of ceremony is it?"

"Umm..."

Haruna glanced at Sera. You were just making up random things to say, weren't you?

... And Sera was definitely the one who blew these crazy ideas

about Santa and Tanabata into her head, wasn't she? Well, Yuu didn't seem very interested in events like this, so by process of elimination the only person who could have taught Haruna about Japanese customs was Sera.

"Sera, stop teaching Haruna weird things."

"I didn't teach her anything weird. Haruna just took what I said and altered them and confused them herself."

Sera spoke in an indifferent tone with a stern expression. She probably didn't want me to involve her.

"Then tell her she's wrong when she starts doing that, dammit."

"Isn't it better this way? Changing things up a bit, rather than doing the same thing over and over again."

"No, I think it's best if we don't touch things that have already been perfected. Wouldn't you hate it if they used watermelon instead in strawberry shortcake? Or if the savory pancake you ordered only had mandarin oranges in it."

"... And you're comparing what Haruna is doing to something like that, which could start an outright war? How terrifying."

"No, what's actually terrifying is that you'd start a war over something like that."

"Alright, I'm done! Let's start the ceremony!"

Haruna collected all the tanzaku back-side up, but I saw her trying to peek at just mine, so I pulled on her ahoge. "Ugyaahh!!" she squealed, and her eyes filled with tears.

I didn't pull on it that hard, but that squeal was incredibly cute.

Maybe her ahoge was her real body.

"D-Don't pull on that..."

"I got it, just hurry up and start."

Haruna held a candle in between her fingers, and for some reason crossed her arms in front of her chest like Wolverine, and started to chant.

“Kaizard, Alzard, Ki, Sku, Hanz, Graz, Silc. Turn everything to ash, and-”

Halloween... hey...²⁹

“Wait just a second! Are you just ripping that off?! Shouldn’t you be waiting until Halloween to make that reference? Or rather, do you seriously think that’s a real chant?!”

“Hueh? It is. It’s magic. I did my best to practice it before too.”

“No no, that’s seriously baffling to me. Just stop it. Is that seriously something you can just practice and be able to do?”

“Ayumu, what exactly are you so afraid of?”

It seems that Ms. Vampire Ninja didn’t appreciate the terror that was Halloween. I should explain to her just how terrifying the magic that appears in manga can be.

Do not worry. Haruna has no magical power.

Well, that was certainly true. She still couldn’t transform into a masou shoujo, after all. Well, that’s a relief.

“I-I do have magical power! I’m pretty sure it’s returned! So if I don’t try, we won’t know, right?!”

“That’s why I’m telling you to stop it, isn’t it?”

By the way, what kind of ceremony is this?

Ah, I’m pretty grateful that Yuu is backing me up here.

I followed her up with a “Yeah, that’s right.” And I wanted to continue “Exactly what kind of ceremony are you doing here?” but I didn’t have the chance to get the words out.

“Doing an event like this together makes us seem like a family, doesn’t it?”

Sera gave a little chuckle.

Ah, indeed. I understood what she meant. I was thinking the same thing, in fact. I smiled just like Sera.

Yuu also seemed to agree. She gave a single nod.

But, as for Haruna...

“W-hat is this... these feelings... oogh...”

Haruna just glared at me with a frowning expression. She didn’t seem happy about something.

“Haruna?”

When I called out to her, Haruna’s face flushed red, almost as if it were being boiled.

“W-What do you want?! Don’t look at me!”

Hey, you were the one looking at me. What just happened? Did my smile annoy you that much? Well, alright, if she wanted to be like that, then I’ll tease her a bit.

“Haruna, you know...”

“Come on! Don’t look at-“

“That hairstyle looks really cute on you.”

“Nyahfth!!”

Haruna made a sound you might expect when you explode an egg in a microwave.

She stood up.

“Ayumu’s hairstyle doesn’t look good at all! Why do you have your hair like that?! You dumb idiot!”

Huh? The only reason I did my hair like this is because you wouldn't shut up and told me to... but before I could retort with that, Haruna had already begun to come at me with a very clean spinning back kick.

"Yuu, help me."

I reached out a hand towards the goddess that was sitting next to me. Yuu put on a somewhat lonely expression and just looked up at Haruna.

"Ah, Ayumu. Didn't you want to ask me something?"

"No... nothing in particular comes to mind."

"Well, then I don't mind. Haruna, please continue."

No, come on, please stop her.

Part 3

July tenth. It was Monday, and this week we were getting our tests back.

At five in the morning, I woke up before everyone else as usual, and snuck into school. The classrooms were locked, so I found a place where I wouldn't be disturbed and slept for another three hours, and when eight rolled around I headed for my classroom, and collapsed into my own seat.

As always, the first person who came in was the male honors student. Even though we were the only two in the room, he was a quiet type and didn't try to talk to me.

Next was the student council president girl. You could guess she was the student council president just by her black-rimmed glasses and her hairstyle that seemed taken right from Doraemon's Shizuka-chan.³⁰

... Although, she actually wasn't the student council president.

Everyone filed into the classroom in the same order as they always did. I guess this is what you called as a lifestyle choice.

And as always, the classroom began to buzz with conversation. But, that had nothing to do with me. No matter what the people around me were talking about, I didn't really care. I just slept there like a cat.

But, was there really a point if I just slept away my school years?

Eight o'clock. It was this time every day when, like clockwork, Orito called out to me. Called out "Aikawaaa~~~," like that. Even if I was sleeping happily.

However, something different happened today.

“Aikawa... Ayumu, right?”

Today, there was someone who called out to me before Aikawa.

It was a girl, with a commanding air about her that reminded me of Sera. If Sera let down her hair, she would probably feel like this. I really couldn't remember having such a pretty girl like this in our class.

“Ah, yeah I am...”

“I'm sure you've already heard. This is the item in question. Let the record show that I delivered it.”

The girl spoke rapidly as she placed a glasses case on my desk.

And then, she hurriedly took out her cell phone, and brushing up her long hair with her hands, she spun and turned her back to me. She probably got an incoming call. Before I could say anything more, she took the phone call without paying me any more attention.

“It's me. I see... and so what?”

So these glasses were the things that Dai-sensei asked me to keep for her? I see, that girl did have a rather masou shoujo-ish appearance. How a she had spoken arrogantly, and how busily she was talking on her phone were also very masou shoujo-like.

“Don't bother me if it's something so trivial! You idiot!”

Piling on the insults in a tone that really reminded me of Sera, the girl hung up the phone, and with a “Please excuse me,” quickly left the room.

I opened the glasses case, and saw a black-rimmed pair of glasses inside. They were a rather out-of-fashion style of glasses.

That girl had seemed really busy, and perhaps also because she seemed so annoyed, I hadn't asked her anything.

How long should I hold on to this?

What exactly was this?

That girl had already left... all that remained was this pair of black-rimmed glasses and the glasses case they came in.

Wondering what kind of magical item this could be, I let my curiosity take hold of me and put them on. I saw the world go transparent.

When I looked at people, I saw through their clothes and could see their underwear. If I concentrated, I could also see through their underwear and see their na-

Were these ero glasses or something?!

Feeling almost as if my head would explode, I instantly took the glasses off. Why in the world was Dai-sensei asking me to hold onto something like this?

If Haruna found out... well, she would definitely kick me.

As Dai-sensei had said, it would be best if I kept this a secret from Haruna.

... I decided to try them out just a bit longer, and put them on again.

And then, a glassy-eyed Orito intruded into my field of view, and I almost coughed out a mouth full of spit. But instead, sweat erupted from my forehead.

... After all, I didn't want to see Orito naked.

"Aikawa~~," he called, his voice almost a purring whine. "Don't tell me you plan to add that girl right now to your harem too?"

His eyebrows twitched and he sent me a glare.

"Harem? Do you mean Haruna and them? Sadly, it's not like that. If only they were a bit more affectionate, it might be a harem, but..."

I put the black-rimmed glasses back in their case, and put the case

in my bag.

“Just living with bishoujo like that is enough to be considered a harem! It’s a state of supreme bliss! Complete paradise! Nirvana! Yes, a paradise of nirvana! Rather, a galaxy of paradise!”

“Let me also just say that if you show any guilt here, then there will be no excuse and you’ll be made into a Zeong.”³¹

“Legs are just for show!”

“No, they’re necessary for humans. You might also lose your fingers, and in the worst case, you’ll be left as only a head.”

“I-If there’s that much risk involved, then all the better!”

“... You’re quite something, you know.”

It became time for homeroom, and Orito took his seat. We would hear the results of our exams today, so I was a bit excited.

It’s been long since I’ve taken classes seriously and completely beaten Orito when we compare test scores during break time. I’ll have to remember to thank Haruna and Yuu properly later.

And then, it was lunch break. Opening up Haruna’s bento box, I was surprised. I was used to being surprised by her bento boxes, but today I was especially surprised.

... It looked normal. What, you ask? Well, the food that was in the bento box just looked really normal.

Hot dog wieners? Meatballs? Hey hey, this is way too normal. I’ll have to remember to compliment her when I get back home. And to think she would even put in healthy, wholesome things like cherry tomatoes and lettuce... she can do quite well when she sets her mind to it, can’t she?

There was also mackerel cooked in miso, hashed beef, and corn soup... nevermind, I withdraw my previous comment.

I was so blinded by the normal appearance of the bento box that my

senses had been fooled for a second.

Because of the corn soup and the hashed beef, all the other food was completely soaked through.

... What exactly was the mackerel really cooked in?!

Well, I mean, I wasn't aware that lunch was going to be only soup, so the messed-up mackerel probably happened because I had accidentally tipped the bento box to the side, but she never told me what the menu was.

She had even finally put in white rice this time... but it was soaked now. Separate the soup into a different container, dammit.

"Ahh, that lunch today is pretty magnificent too."

I wasn't the one who had said that. It was the spiky-haired guy who had a smile on his face that was so wide it was almost disgusting... indeed, I wasn't the only one who looked forward to Haruna's exquisite lunches.

"Tell Haruna-chan for me. I want to eat hamburger."

As if she would actually take your suggestion seriously. She wouldn't even take mine seriously.

"Go to the convenience market. They have Japanese-style hamburger bentos for five hundred yen."

"Aikawa, I'm not you. I can't be satisfied off convenience market lunches alone."

Oh hoh. He said that fully knowing how crazy I was for convenience markets, didn't he? Well, you might have the upper hand, but I'll take you up on that challenge.

"Set your teeth. I'll show you how far humans can go."

"Ah, right. Aikawa, I have something I want to give you."

You too? First Dai-sensei... am I a warehouse or something?

Orito handed me a plastic bag that was hanging from one of his hands. From its size and shape, it looked like a book.

I began to take a look inside the bag, when..

“Are you an idiot?! Aikawa! Don’t open that here! You’d die.”

Orito desperately tried to stop me... so this was something I couldn’t look at in public? I would die if I did that?

“That’s something that’s really, really good. But seriously, keep it a secret from Haruna, alright?”

Why exactly did Haruna’s name come up there? And then, a deep suspicion began to well up within me.

Masou shoujo could manipulate the memories of humans. So maybe Dai-sensei was manipulating Orito and trying to hand this to me through him?

... Yeah, right. If that were the case, then what was up with the ero glasses before? At that point, I concluded that the chances of that happening were pretty low.

Although, the thought of Dai-sensei giving me ero glasses like that was also pretty strange.

“Hahahaha! What the hell is up with that disgusting-looking bento?”

I almost tumbled out of my chair at that sudden voice. I was so shaken that my body snapped sideways and my head crashed into the window.

“Y-You! ... Why are you here?!”

I was seriously surprised. There was a boy... no, a girl... right there. Another vampire ninja, Mael Strom.

When she wore our school’s uniform like that, she really did look like a girl. And now that I look at her, she did have a good set of breasts. Putting her hands on her hips like that, she looked quite

imposing.

“Why, you ask...”

“Hey, Tomonori. What’s up?”

Orito looked up at Mael with a set of chopsticks in his mouth. Tomonori? What? That was a guy’s name.

“I told you, it’s not Tomonori! It’s Yuki! Yuki!”

“Orito, you know her?”

“What are you saying, Aikawa? She’s the hope of the track and field team. She’s in the class next door... you’ve seen her during gym class, right? You seriously don’t know?”

Well, certainly, our class had gym class with the class next door, but they separated the boys and the girls, you know? And during gym, I have to deal with being directly under the sun. Orito probably spent all gym class staring at the girls.

“So, Tomonori. What’s wrong?”

“I told you not to call me that!”

“Um, so what’s up with this ‘Tomonori’ thing?”

“Ahh, it’s this guy’s nickname for me. My name is ‘Yoshida Yuki,’ but the ‘Yu’ in ‘Yuki’ is written with the same kanji as the ‘Tomo’ in ‘Tomodachi,’ so if you interpret it like that you could read my name as Tomonori, right? And also, it’s because I act like a boy.”

“That makes sense.”

I gave a little chuckle, and Mael... or should I call her Tomonori? Well, anyways, Yoshida Yuki was a fake name, right?

“D-Don’t laugh. Umm... Aikawa... Ayumu, right?”

Her face was flushed red like an apple. Maybe I should start calling her apple-chan.

“Yeah.”

“To have a guy like this as my husband...”

Husband?

“... W-What kinds of things do you like to eat?”

“Well, I guess shrimp... and fried chicken?”

“Ah! The fried chicken at that place over there is really good!”

“Oh? So you know that place?”

“Yeah, I know it I know it! It’s even better than Centaur Fried Chicken!”³²

Where the hell is that? Were they frying chicken or horse?

“So, why do you ask?”

“Ahh, umm... well, that is... f-from tomorrow... I-I thought I would make your bento for you.”

She slurred those words out with her face still completely read.

“Tomonori... Aikawa... are you two going out?”

Orito, there’s really no need to cry here...

“W-We aren’t going out! Also, stop calling me Tomonori! I’m a girl!”

“What she said. Also, stop crying. I hate seeing men cry.”

“Then, why is she... bento... Aikawaaa~~”

I already told you that we aren’t going out, so stop crying. And stop being annoying and take your hands off my shirt.

“S-Shut up, you! My dreams... have turned into marriage!”

She swiftly turned her back and made a sour expression. No no no

no. I have no idea what you mean.

“Hold on. I still don’t really know what’s going on here...”

“Um, well, to us, what you did back there was...”

“Sera already told me about that. But that was an accident. It didn’t count. You told me that as well, didn’t you?”

“But to our group, you know, what you did was not something to be taken lightly. No matter what the circumstances were, I’m to blame for not being more careful... so I came here after resolving to do what I have to!”

“Wait, no, that’s strange isn’t it? What about your feelings? What about my feelings?”

“... I can’t go against law. Or rather... I don’t want to go against law. We can worry about feelings later.”

“Well, vampires are-“ “Uwaaah!”

She interrupted me before I could finish. It seemed that saying “vampire ninja” was forbidden.

“Vam-“ “Uwaaah!”

Mael leaned herself in so she could whisper in my ear.

“If you tell people about vampire ninjas, I’ll spread the word that you’ve been running around in that strange cosplay.”

We smiled at each other. It seemed that we had reached an agreement. I cleared my throat.

“You lot sure aren’t flexible, are you?”

“Yeah. And we are proud of that. So... you are my husband.”

“H-Hey Aikawa... what’s Tomonari talking to you about?”

“She’s been giving me a report on Alaskan fur seals.”

Well, this situation was just a mess now.

Husband? Do you really think I could agree to something like that?

She herself didn't really seem like a bad person, and from what I could gather from talking to her, she wasn't that unpleasant as a person either. But my original goal had been to live out my school life alone... no no no. Did I really still believe that? I should have already realized that being alone was not a good thing.

She seemed to be a good person, so it might be nice to have her as a friend. Hm? Could it be that she intended to come live at my house too? I tried to ask her that question indirectly, and...

"Se-" Mael began to say Seraphim's name, when she glanced at Orito's face and stopped herself.

"That person is there, so I can't go there. If you say you want to live with me though... well, you can."

Because they were enemies, right? Well, the minute they met again, Sera might pin her and hole her down by the arms again.

"I'll pass. Having a freeloader suddenly show up would be a nuisance, wouldn't it? Don't just invite outsiders over to your house that easily. Also, there's still one thing on my mind."

"What is it?"

"What should I call you? Mael?"

"Calling me that in school would be weird, wouldn't it? You sure are stupid."

No, I think the weird thing was agreeing to be someone's wife just from something like that. That was what was stupid.

"Well then... Tomonori?"

"At least call me by my family name!"

Part 4

School had ended, and I had been left in the classroom by myself for quite a while.

The evening had faded into dusk. When I looked down at the school grounds, I could see the track team practicing, with Tomonori among them.

Was it honestly alright for a “husband and wife” duo like us to feel so little like a real husband and wife?

It was just one kiss. And it was an accidental kiss. Given those circumstances, even if she told me that I was her husband, it really didn’t feel like that at all. Well, I guess the best thing to do was to just ignore it all.

“Ayumu.”

I heard a familiar voice, and jumped up in surprise. “Wha-?!”

In the classroom, a 1.45 meter tall girl was standing. She began to slowly walk towards me, her head facing downwards, her hands joined behind her back, and her cheeks flushed red.

Even though she usually didn’t wear skirts or things like that, Haruna had a pleated one-piece on today.

“What are you doing? Did a Megalo show up or something?”

Haruna’s ahoge shook from side to side.

“Is it so bad for me to come and meet you?”

She jut out her jaw like a duck. She came to meet me here? Even though there wasn’t a Megalo?

“Ah, no, well... thanks then. Oh, right, I did well on my exams thanks to you. I’m really grateful.”

Haruna's eyes widened for a moment before she looked away and began to mumble as if she was talking with her mouth full.

"T-That's obvious, isn't it? If you failed the exams after that... I was going to take your brains and perform an autopsy dissection on them."

She wasn't as energetic as she usually was, but what she talked about was still the same.

What was wrong? Did something happen to Haruna? It just seemed that recently, Haruna had been acting strangely.

"Take this."

Haruna was holding a mandarin orange in her hands.

"For me?"

I took the orange she offered me, and wanting to eat it right away, began to try to peel it with my thumb-

"Hey! Bayumu, that orange is a bomb in disguise-"

Missed it by just a hair. I stopped midway, the nail on my thumb barely away from digging into the orange... who the hell was Bayumu?

"You have something against me or something?"

"N-No! It seems like Megalo are showing up in large numbers, so if you meet one before I can come and bring you Mystletainn... well... I was worried."

Haruna was worried for me?

"I'm grateful, but it's not like I can carry an orange around with me."

"Ah, alright. I also have one in the shape of a pencil..."

"Let's go with that one then. You can take the ora-... well, actually,

you carrying it around would be pretty dangerous.”

“Eh? ... Mm.”

She really didn't have much energy today. If she kept this up, it was going to throw everything out of whack.

I took the pencil-shaped bomb she held out to me and put it in my pocket.

“If you take the eraser off, it's going to explode, so be careful.”

“Got it... ah, right, Haruna. Do you want to go to an arcade?”

“Arcade?”

“It's a place to have fun. Want to go?”

Nod. Haruna nodded without making a sound... was she really alright?

“Hey, Ayumu... the words ‘thank you’ are pretty strong, aren't they...?”

“Huh?” Once again, she had said something strange. And please, stop your ahoge from looking so lonely. For some reason, it makes my chest ache.

“It's too strong, it's way too strong, and I can't use it well... like Ayumu can.”

So that was it? She just wanted to try it out?

“Haruna, you look really cute in that outfit.”

“Eh? Really? That leaf woman picked it out for me.”

I had tried to give her an opportunity to say “thank you,” but...

Well, her response was pretty like her, so whatever.

“If we're going to an arcade, then it would be more fun with more people, right?”

“Eh? ... Mm.”

I took out my cell phone, and Haruna nodded, seeming a bit sulky.

Part 5

Loud music assaulted my ears. The jumbled mess of sounds came at me from all directions without mercy.

Even Haruna, who had been quiet up until now, couldn't help but have a sparkle in her eyes when faced with such flashy things. I guess it was right to go to the arcade. I'm relieved.

Almost as if she was trying to beat the noise, Haruna seemed even livelier than usual.

“What is this place?! What is all this sorcery?! Not good! Ayumu! Are you trying to do me in?!”

Haruna was wearing a pleated one piece. What was strange was that wrapping herself in that one piece almost made her seem like a gentle girl, which was quite different from the usual impression she gave off.

“Don't worry. All the sorcery here is meant for you to have fun with.”

“O-Ohh. That's pretty nice!”

Haruna ran off, seeming quite happy. I watched her receding back, when I felt a tug on my shirt's hem. I turned around, and saw a silver-haired girl staring up at me.

It was Yuu, whom I had called out by phone. It seemed that she had gotten here before us.

... Although, was it just Yuu? I also invited Tomonori, but she said that there was some vampire ninja meeting after club, so she refused. Maybe Sera was also going to the vampire ninja meeting?

Ayumu. What are we doing here?

Yuu seemed slightly frightened of all the noise. She had already covered one of her ear with one of her gauntlets.

The people who passed us didn't really stare, even after they saw Yuu.

If she walked normally down the street, she would attract weird stares, but that seemed to be different here. After all, people who loved cosplay tended to gather here.

“Sera isn't with you?”

She had plans, so she will be a bit late.

I watched Haruna as she pitter-pattered all around the place.

“Do you want to try the UFO Catcher?”

I walked towards the crane game corner. Yuu kept up with me and walked by my side, and gave me another memo.

I'm a bit scared.

The arcade might have been too loud for Yuu. I walked and worried about that, but when we arrived at the crane game corner, Yuu began to look all around her.

She twisted slowly and with her entire body, almost as if she was checking each and every prize in the crane games.

“You see something you want?”

All of it.

All of it, huh? Well that's good. It seems that she's enjoying herself then.

“You like things like this then?”

They look like Megalo.

Ah, now that she mentions it, Megalo did look like stuffed animals.

I have to save them.

Well, I never thought about it like that. I began to head towards the change machine to change my bills into coins.

“Ayumu! Ayumu! This place is pretty fun!”

The minute I opened my wallet, Haruna came bounding over. Surprised, I dropped the 1000-yen note I was holding. I guess it's true that noisy people really like noisy places.

Haruna took the 1000-yen note I had dropped and 6000 yen she had on hand, and brazenly converted them all into coins. So, Haruna also had money from this world? Was the money part of her allowance?

There were probably other masou shoujo who had stayed for a while in this world. If that's the case, then it wouldn't be strange if they were being funded. After all, it was natural, given that they were risking their lives. I mean, you couldn't do anything in this world without money.

“Today's on me! Go and enjoy yourself! Go go!”

Well thanks. But that 1000 yen was mine.

I split the mountain of coins with Haruna, and we went back to Yuu.

Let's have fun! Let's have more fun than we should be able to right now! Let's make sure Haruna never looks as sad as she did back there.

A full smile rose across my face, and I spoke louder than I usually did.

“First, you put a coin in here!”

It wasn't because we were in a noisy place. It was more like I was an innocent, excited child.

The two girls gazed at the coin slot with deep interest.

“You push this button and decide what you want to aim for...”

I looked in from the side, from above, and honed in on something that looked easy to grab. It was this part of the game that was the most fun. Alright... let's go with that one.

I decided to go for a stuffed bear. There were no obstacles between it and the exit slot, and the distance I had to move it wasn't bad either. Its head was also around as big as the crane.

Yuu stared at my face as I chuckled.

Yes, just watch me... this is... my way of life!

The arm grabbed the bear. Tch... looks like my aim was just a bit off. But, I'll grab onto you tighter than a vice! If I do that...

“..... Ah.” I heard Haruna say that, and at the same time, the stuffed bear fell.

AAAaaaaaaghhh!!!



I let out a loud scream inside my head.

... To be honest, I had never won anything from games like these.

Each and every person had their own strong and weak points.

No matter how much you tried, something that was impossible was going to stay impossible.

That was my way of life.

“So, well, that’s sorta how you do it...”

When I turned around, I saw Yuu hugging a stuffed dolphin. She used the back of the same memo from before to write something.

I rescued it. = “Onii-chan, look look! I won it!”

Seriously? On the first try?

But I was too late. = “But, it’s not moving~~~.”

Well, it was never alive in the first place.

“Ayumu! Look here! It’s a masterpiece!”

There was a huge stuffed bear poking its head out the prize slot. Haruna pointed to the stuffed bear that was completely stuck in the slot and laughed uproariously.

... Was it honestly possible to even get that out at this point?

I called an arcade employee over, and he got the huge stuffed bear out for us. It seemed that if you could pack it into the exit slot that completely, you could take it home with you even if it wouldn’t come out of the slot.

I couldn’t lose here. I had my pride as a human of this world!

I tossed in a 500-yen coin and aimed for another prize. I went for something closer to the exit slot this time. I didn’t even have to pick it up. I changed the plan and resolved to just roll it into the exit with the arm.

But, it was hopeless. I was drowning in quicksand... it was overwhelmingly, overwhelmingly hopeless.

“Honestly, I just can’t stand watching you anymore.”

I heard the beautiful voice of a goddess behind me, and I hurriedly turned around. Feeling embarrassed that she had seen me completely failing at the crane game, I tried to change the subject.

“Ah, so you finally came. What are you doing here?”

“You were the one who called me here, and you’re still asking me what I’m doing here? Are you that much of an idiot?”

There stood a ponytailed girl of unrivaled beauty.

My eyes couldn’t help but wander to her bosom hidden by her tube-top. I just had to marvel at her charm points, which were all brought out by her short denim jeans and stockings.

“Get out of the way.”

Sera faced me as my eyes restlessly darted up and down, and brushed me aside as she tossed a 100-yen coin into the machine and pushed the start button.

She was aiming for the upside-down stuffed animal that was resting right above the exit slot.

There wasn’t really a place on that one to grip onto. It was also impossible to roll that one with the arm.

The arm grabbed onto the stuffed animal’s head. Wait wait, you should at least try to pick it up from the middle. It’s not going to get lifted at all, you know? Geez, you suck. Well, I guess this wasn’t really a game that seemed to mesh well with vampire ninjas.

As I thought, the head was lifted just slightly, but the body didn’t follow. And then, the head slipped from the crane arm.

See? What did I tell you? At least, that’s what I was thinking, but then the head was pulled by gravity back down to the bottom. The recoil from that collision caused the stuffed animal to do what looked like a frontwards somersault... and then...

“This is what I call a Tsuame Gaeshi.”

What in the world... you could do it that way too?!

Sera handed me her war trophy. The slight, sweet smell of perfume tickled my nostrils.

“Hm? Hey, it’s the leaf woman!”

Haruna’s eyes gleamed, and the minute she caught sight of Sera, she sent a low tackle her way. Now that I think about it, at that point it was pretty rare for Haruna to send that kind of attack at anyone other than me.

“Haruna...”

“Take a look! It’s the outfit you picked for me! It’s cute, isn’t it?!”

Haruna tugged up the hem of her clothes and spun around.

“... Yeah, it really fits you well.”

“Obviously!”

When she saw Haruna flashing her teeth and giving a huge smile like that, Sera gave a gentle smile in return.

“Haruna, come with me. Let’s have a match.”

Sera left with Haruna in tow. They almost looked like sisters.

I felt a tug on my shirt, and saw Yuu holding out another memo for me.

Ayumu is with me. = “Oniichan, play with Yuu~~!”

“Ahh, how about one of those amusement park games?”

It was quite an honor to be invited like that by Yuu.

I went and enjoyed some amusement park games with Yuu, while Sera and Haruna played more competitive games, like racing games or one-on-one fighters.

Quite unexpectedly, Sera and Haruna seemed to be tied for the number of victories. This should have been the first time Haruna had been in an arcade or played a game like this. Was Sera going easy on her, or was Haruna just incredibly fast at getting accustomed to new things? Maybe this was just why they called her a genius.

“Ayumu! Have a match with me!”

I was called to, and I somewhat reluctantly agreed to be her sparring partner. I didn’t really want to do it, but this may be a chance to beat up the person who spent all day attacking me silly.

Fufufu. Maybe we’ll go with this game. I’ll teach her how much of a difference time and practice can make...

“Ayumu sucks.”

“O-One more time!”

Impossible! To think I would...

“What if I don’t use four of the buttons?”

I couldn’t even win one match... and what’s more, I had a handicap... this was seriously humiliating. My pride was...

“Don’t use five.”

Who needs pride?

If I could beat Haruna, I’d use anything I could, and that included handicaps... but I was still crushed.

“Ayumu! What’s that box over there?!”

Haruna pointed at something with her ahoge. What I saw there was...

“Ah, a Purikura box?”³³

“Ohh, I’ve heard rumors told of those things...”

“You’ve heard about them in rumors?”

“It’s an abbreviation for the name of the seventh Nepalese king, who was enthroned in the year 1881, right?”

... Who the hell is that?!

“No, this isn’t about Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah.”

Why the hell did Sera know what she was talking about?!

Pre-crash Safety System?

Completely wrong. That was something you would find in cars.

“It’s just a normal photo booth.”

“Ahh, photo booth, huh? Got it got it!”

Haruna gave me a dry smile and ran into the booth. But she came out immediately.

“So, what do I do?”

“You take photos.”

“Alright! I’ll take them to death!”

Like that, all four of us decided to go in and take photos in the photo booth.

I wasn’t really a big fan of photo booths... but well... it wouldn’t be bad to have a photo to commemorate the occasion.

It wouldn’t be bad, but...

“Hyaah!!”

Flash.

I was the only one who showed up on the photo.

Haruna had kicked me flying, and my face was pushed against the

camera, leading to a completely unintelligible photo.

“Haruna!! Don’t move!!”

“Eh? Wasn’t something flying out at us?”

“Just stay still for the next shot! Alright?”

“Hyaaaah!!”

Flash.

Ughhhhh God dammit!!!

“Haruna, seriously stay still! We’re wasting our money like this!”

“As if I care! It’s fine if we’re having fun, right?!”

“Haruna, it’s just as Ayumu says. Now would be the time to stay still.”

“Eh? ... Well, I know that...”

“Alright, let’s all smiiiiile~~.”

I gave my best zombie smile. Haruna gave an arrogant one, Sera a kind one, and Yuu just kept her usual cold-as-ice expression.

Flash.

“Hueh? Who’s this cute girl here... i-is it me?”

Haruna seemed a bit bashful as she gazed at the screen. Everyone ignored her, and Sera began to write out names on the screen with the pen tool while explaining.

“You can use this to draw on the photos.”

“What kind of magic is this?”

“It’s science.”

“A-Ahh. That kind of magic.”

No, that's not magic at all.

Haruna started covering every inch of the close-up photo of me with drawings.

"Oh no! This is pretty fun!"

She drew hearts, or words, and all at an alarming speed.

"You're doing way too much. Yuu, do you want to try?"

Yuu shook her head. She honestly looked like she wanted to try too...

Like that, we got the photos that were taken and split them amongst ourselves.

—

There was the one of Haruna sticking her hand up and flashing her teeth at the camera.

There was the one of Sera with her charming smile.

There was the one of me pulling Yuu's lips left and right and forcing a smile onto her face.

They were all items that I would find hard to throw away.

—

However...

"Ayumu, here."

The ones that were handed to me was the close-up of me, and the one where I had been kicked and looked panicked.

Why did I have to be handed photos that mostly only showed myself?

On the one where I had been kicked, someone had written "naturally born idiot."

Haruna, these... but before I could finish that thought, Yuu began to firmly tug on my clothes. When I faced her, I saw that Yuu was gazing at the photos that I was holding.

“Could it be that you want these?”

Yuu’s expression was speckled with just a bit of bewilderment, and she nodded lightly.

“Alright, we can split them half and half then.”

I tried to give Yuu the photos that were either mostly of me or the ones where I had been kicked, but for some reason she seemed to want all the ones where I had been kicked.

“I doubt you’d be happy to only have those.”

“Indeed. There’s a meaning here in sharing these.”

Even at Sera’s suggestion, Yuu shook her head. Did she really want these photos that badly?

As she wished, I gave her all the copies of that photo. If she really wanted them, then I had no reason to refuse. The only ones I was left with were the ones that were a close-up of me.

I didn’t manage to get a copy of the one where everyone had been in the picture...

But I was satisfied.

Part 6

Yuu and I watched as Sera and Haruna had fun with one of the shooting games.

“Look Haruna, there’s a zombie coming from your right.”

“Die! Die zombie!”

“Look, that filthy-looking zombie is still there.”

“Go to hell! Go to hell zombie!”

I wonder why... I wonder why my ears hurt.

Why was everyone just so merciless when it came to zombies?

Haruna and Sera shot down every zombie without a single miss, almost as if they had already known where and when each enemy was going to appear.

Stop iiiiiit. Just stoooooooooooooop...

What did those zombies ever do to you?! All they’re doing is appearing in front of you!

They could just be coming out to go to the bathroom... ah! Head shot!

I’m sure that amongst all those zombies, there were a few that just wanted to hide away and live out the rest of their days peacefully.

Then you... just because they were zombies... just because these creatures were zombies...

Their gun barrels didn’t cease as they continued to gun the zombies down. After a bit, an audience began to form around these pretty girls.

I wouldn't be able to play such a cruel game. Do your best, zombies! Don't lose, zombies!

Is Ayumu having fun?

"Ahh, lots of fun..."

Everyone's gazes were pinned to the two playing the game, but only Yuu was looking at me.

Really?

"Ahh, just seeing Yuu and the others having fun is enough to make me happy."

Yuu grabbed my hand and gave me a nod.

I feel the same way.

In the end, they finished the game without a single miss, but without waiting a single moment...

"Next is that one!"

Haruna pulled Sera's hand and they moved to the next game.

Watching Sera playing a racing game just made Eurobeat music play through my head, while watching her ponytail sway back and forth when she played a dancing game was also a pretty impressive sight.

Crap. This was really fun. I was getting really excited.

It seemed that Haruna intended to go through and beat every game today.

"Let's take a short break. I'm getting thirsty."

I guess even Sera thought that she wouldn't be able to keep up with Haruna's level of energy. At Sera's suggestion, Haruna's ahoge waved back and forth unhappily.

"Alright, then the gloomy necromancer is next!"

Haruna pulled Yuu along with her with a full smile, not seeming to pay any heed to what Yuu wanted.

She really seemed to like the arcade.

They began a game of air hockey, but they seemed to be evenly matched, and neither girl seemed to be able to score a single point.

So, I switched places with Yuu, and resolved to give Haruna a beating she wouldn't forget this time.

I was pretty confident in my air hockey skills.

Clang clang! The sounds of the puck flying back and forth filled the air.

You're giving me pretty easy shots, Haruna. I'll make you regret that! This is my Magnum Tornado!

Cling!

"Hyah."

Haruna took a victory pose and let out a weird sound.

... Whaaa?

Clang clang clang.

There it is! Here's my final counter, Hekatonkheires's Gatekeeper!"³⁴

Cling!

"Hyah."

Haruna took a victory pose and let out a weird sound.

God dammit! I can't win at all. Every single one of my secret techniques had been beaten.

"I feel sad for you. About your head, I mean." Sera left me with those rather questionable words of consolation.

Someday, I want to come again.

Yuu seemed to have had quite a bit of fun here.

But most of all, I was happy that Haruna seemed to have returned to her old, happy self.

Part 7

Like that, we had our heart's fill of fun at the arcade, and then left.

Haruna took a nice, long stretch. Why was it that girls seemed so erotic when they stretched? Was it because you could really see their breasts with their arms over their heads like that? Was it because their backs being curved really highlighted their breasts? Were their voices themselves erotic?

In any case, when the normally not-erotic Haruna stretched like that, even she seemed just a bit sexy.

Then, right after I averted my eyes... right in front of the arcade we had just come out of...

There was a Megalo.

All animals that wore boy's school uniforms were Megalo. They were the easiest thing in the world to recognize.

This Megalo really did look like a stuffed animal. The Megalo there was a bunny with slightly green ears. He almost looked like a daikon radish.

Good grief. I released my schoolbag, which had been filled to the brim with stuffed animals and cell-phone straps, and let it fall to the ground. It would only get in the way of the battle.

The bunny took one look at my face, and...

“Usagee~~!³⁵ It's a masou shoujo!”

He shouted that. He was standing on two feet, but his size was pretty much the size of a normal rabbit. He was just a cute little rabbit.

“Haruna, are you alright?”

“Hueh? Why?”

“Come on, there’s a Megalo in front of you... look there.”

“Hueh? That’s a Megalo? Really?”

“He’s wearing a school uniform and he’s standing upright, so he has to be a Megalo, right?”

“But... he doesn’t look strong at all... ah, is this a bunny?!”

When Haruna approached, the bunny began to hobble slowly away. He might be a bunny, but he didn’t seem to have any intention of hopping.

Then, the bunny spun in a half-circle, and for some odd reason... hid behind me in my shadow.

What the hell...

“He really doesn’t feel like a monster at all, does it?”

Even though Sera said that, her eyes had already bled crimson. Hey hey, if you say that, why do you still look like you have every intention to beat him down?

“H-Help me.”

Even if you tell me that... in any case, I bopped him on the head, and the bunny’s eyes teared up. He ran towards Yuu.

“The human punched meee~~~.”

He almost sounded like a child seeking comfort from its mother.

Yuu stroked his head softly.

“Ah, look, he’s carrying something.”

Sera took something from the bunny. It was an envelope.

“Give it back! I’ll rabbit you, you asshole!”

What the hell did that mean?

“Haruna, what rank is this Megalo?”

“Bunny Megalo are the lowest rank, rank D. Us masou shoujo started by hunting rabbits. Even the gloomy necromancer could probably beat him with one hand.”

It seemed that we had just come across this Megalo by accident, so we really didn't have to beat him. Haruna also seemed to have lost interest. Although, I did punch him once.

Sera opened the envelope, and took out a single piece of paper. She looked at it and her expression became suspicious.

“What's written on it?”

“... Nothing.”

“Huh?”

“Nothing is written on it.”

Sera showed me the contents of the envelope.

What was the meaning of this?

I picked up my bag... wait just a second. This wouldn't happen to be another thing Dai-sensei wanted me to hold onto, would it?

For example, suppose Dai-sensei sent a masou shoujo my way, but she got beaten by a Megalo, and this envelope was stolen from her. Now suppose that battle scene was close by, and we just happened to bump into this Megalo with this envelope. Was that possible?

Nah, that was preposterous. However, why would anyone ever put a blank sheet of paper in an envelope? Surely this white piece of paper also had some meaning to it?

Well, if that were true, I might as well believe that having a bomb shaped like an orange was also...

Orange?

Ah, right. What about invisible ink? I've heard somewhere that you could use citrus fruits to write invisible letters, and they would show up with heat.

But even if that idea was right, it's not like I could test it.

If this were really something Dai-sensei had given me, then I couldn't just do what I wanted with it.

"Give it back! What do you think you're doing?! Returning a favor with a grudge?!"

Exactly what kind of favor do you think you've done for us? The bunny tried to get the paper back, but he was too short and even with his jumps he couldn't reach the paper.

"I'll let you run away, so disappear."

I whispered that into his long ears, and the bunny opened its mouth wide, almost seeming in shock.

"Hmph, this world should just go and get destroyed by the masou shoujo!"

The bunny left those words in the air and hobbled off.

"Geez, what a weird Megalo. Saying masou shoujo were going to destroy the world..."

He was not mistaken.

"Really?"

I turned the conversation to Haruna, and...

"Yeah. Virie is trying to purify this world."

It was an instant response.

Purify? What did that mean? No matter how I interpreted it, it just left a bad echo in my ears. Were the masou shoujo really trying to

destroy this world like that bunny had said?

... That has to be a lie, right?

I thought that the masou shoujo had come to protect this world from the threat of the Megalo. Vampire ninjas were the same way.

Were masou shoujo... was I acting on the side of justice? What was justice in the first place?

Also, if that's the case... what should I do?

Should I stay as a masou shoujo and continue fighting the Megalo?

No, justice had nothing to do with it. Megalo went after the masou shoujo. Kyouko and the people helping her behind the scenes were going after Yuu.

I needed the power of the masou shoujo to fight against those entities.

Yes, I had to drive away the sparks that were falling down.

Sparks that were not falling down on me, but rather on Yuu and Haruna.

END CHAPTER 2

Chapter 3 – ... I Want to Go to the Bathroom

(This destiny was my doing.)



The arcade was pretty fun. I thought that.

... I accidentally thought that. Even though I wasn't supposed to ever feel any emotions.

And that's why that person appeared. I couldn't stay calm.

Just seeing that person's face... just that one look...

That was enough to turn me into Hellscythe.

Once again, I couldn't keep my feelings in check. And my emotions were still running high.

And the wheels of fate began to turn rapidly.

Everything was my fault. And... everything after this was also my fault.

Because of me, Ayumu...

He fell prey to Sera's cooking...

Part 1

After the bunny Megalo ran off, we finally began to walk back home. I carried bags in both of my hands that were way too stuffed with the stuffed animals we had won from the UFO catcher games. Also, why the hell was I the only one carrying these? But before I could voice that objection, Yuu took one of the bags from me.

Ahh, Yuu's kindness was just seeping deep into me.

Haruna skipped ahead of us casually. She didn't even notice that the traffic light was red... or maybe she just didn't know what that meant.

Sera grabbed Haruna by the hand the moment before she was about to head into the crosswalk. Ahh, that was close.

"Haruna, the traffic light is red."

"I forgot... and oh right, those lights are dyed red with blood, aren't they?!"

Yeah sure... so please be aware of the danger here.

"Well, anyways. Red means stop."

"A-Ah, okay."

Sera wiped the saliva that had started to leak from the corner of her lips. It seemed that the phrase "dyed red with blood" sounded pretty delicious to vampire ninjas.

The light turned green, and we headed into the hustle and bustle.

People passed us by, and I accidentally bumped the bag I was holding into a salaryman in the middle of the crosswalk.

"Sorry," I told the salaryman. At that moment, I saw Yuu out of the corner of my eye.

Next to Yuu was a tall man with his hands thrust in his pockets. He looked around high-school aged. His face was close enough to Yuu's to kiss her if he wanted. Was there a molester in the middle of the crosswalk?

I set down the big bags I had just gotten a moment ago onto the white lines of the crosswalk.

The moment I tried to call out to Yuu, I saw her take out the ballpoint pen she always used, held it aloft and pointed it backwards. After she did that, the ballpoint pen transformed into a huge scythe.

... Is that a weapon?

The crosswalk erupted into an uproar at the sudden appearance of the scythe.

The normal people next to Yuu panicked and tried to get away from the crosswalk. Not paying any heed to the people around her, Yuu brought the scythe down. The molester didn't show any signs of wanting to dodge, and the scythe bit into his shoulder. However, that man... he just smiled. He didn't seem bothered in the least by the fresh blood flying from his shoulder, and didn't even take his hands out of his pockets.

"Is it really alright for you to be getting that worked up?"

The man gave a suggestive smile. That voice... I remembered that voice.

It was the same voice that I had heard coming from Kyouko that time I had driven her into a corner.

"You sure look like you want to know why I've appeared here, don't you Eucliwood?"

When the man said that, Yuu gave a firm nod. By the way, I was giving him the exact same look like Yuu was. He was being showered by distrustful looks, but he didn't seem to care about any other than Yuu's.

Yuu looked different from usual. She always had this mysterious atmosphere about her... but today she felt even more mysterious than usual.

Her silver hair gently fluttered outwards. It wasn't because a wind was blowing, but rather because of a blue light that was spiraling upwards from beneath her feet.

"What a coincidence. Yes, I just happened to walk through here. Eucliwood, that was your fault, wasn't it?"

The man laughed, and Yuu looked sadder than usual.

How the hell was it Yuu's fault if it was a coincidence?

"You sure have a lot of stuffed animals there. It looks like you had lots of fun. That's not good. You're always the cause, Eucliwood."

Yuu's aura billowed out from her body. It was a clear-blue aura, reminiscent of the sky or of water. A faint, ruby-colored light was mixed in the middle of that blaze. That color was the same color I was used to when I used the chainsaw. In other words, Haruna's magical power.

"That scythe..." When I muttered that, Sera responded.

"That's a hug pillow, Ayumu."

Huh?

"Did you not know? When Hellscythe-dono sleeps, she sleeps hugging that scythe."

Hellscythe... ah, I see. Yuu's name even had "scythe" in it.

So was that Yuu's original form? If she hugged that, wouldn't that make it hard to sleep? Wait, what the hell am I getting all confused for?! Calm down, calm down...

In any case, I really had to do something about the people panicking around us.

“Everyone! That’s a hug pillow! Don’t panic please! It’s a hug pillow!!”

Honestly, even I didn’t know what the hell I was saying.

Considering how much this scene was starting to look like a murder scene, how could a normal zombie like me keep from panicking?

People around us continued to run away. Yuu tore the scythe back up and swung it again, but the man jumped back with such force I thought he was using a trampoline.

“At a time when you are trembling with joy, the one whom you least wanted to meet appears. Did you really not want to meet me so badly, Eucliwood?”

“Yaaaahh!!”

Yuu cried out and strongly held her scythe aloft, launching into a kamikaze shoulder charge. The man just shook his head, and a minute later, took a step forward and instantly closed the gap between him and Yuu. He punched Yuu in the face and sent her flying.

“Yuu! Sera, stop Yuu!”

Yuu re-gripped her scythe, and with an intense magical aura wrapped around her, Yuu kicked off the ground.

The scythe’s tip dug into the man’s eye.

“Don’t stab me so much. It’s still too soon. There is still not enough firewood for the flame. Yes... there is still more firewood to burn before I can burn through your heart.”

A smile appeared on the man’s face and he stroked Yuu’s cheek. Yuu ground her teeth and began to put strength in the hand that held the scythe.

It was a bizarre sight. The man whose eyes were being gouged out just smiled kindly, while the person bringing the scythe down looked incredibly frustrated.

Although those two had stopped their motions, blue-colored magical energy violently collided all around them.

It was plain even for me to see that Yuu's magical energy was running wild.

“Also, because you're here getting excited... all the humans who are here have had their destinies changed. Everything that happens from this point is your fault.”

As if he had finished saying everything he had wanted to say, a dark blue fog the color of deep night scattered about, and the man disappeared. When the fog cleared, in the man's place there was...

A huge crowd of Megalo. There was enough that it was almost like seeing the start line at the beginning of a marathon.

Megalo again? There really seemed to be a huge number that showed up here. Ah, this was probably because Yuu's magical energy had run wild. When the man from before said that “all the humans who are here have had their destinies changed,” could he have meant that a lot of Megalo would appear?

... Stop being an idiot, Ayumu. Yuu isn't the bad guy here.

... This is just a coincidence.

Part 2

Yuu loosened her grip on the hand that was holding the scythe. Her eyes were filled with despair.

“Yuu... are you alright?”

I put one of my hand on her thin, frail shoulders and she slowly turned her face to look at mine. Tears threatened to fall from her eyes.

When I took my hand off her shoulder, I had the feeling that I had lost something.

Her eyes were wet with tears and her body was shaking. Her lips were stiffened, as if she were trying to hold something in.

I wanted to embrace her. I wanted to stroke her head. I wanted to do something for her. Rather, I knew that I had to do something for her.

Yuu transformed the scythe back into a ballpoint pen, and with her usual emotionless face, pretending like nothing had happened, she turned towards the Megalo that jammed the crosswalk.

My fault.

No, that’s not true. But I couldn’t say even those simple words.

Well, crap. There was no possible way I could deal with this many Megalo without my masou renki.

Sera also seemed to feel the same way.

“Ayumu...”

“Sera, let’s run.”

“As someone who calls herself a vampire ninja, I can’t back down

and must fight no matter what kind of enemy-“

“Yeah, however. What about Haruna and Yuu? You can’t fight while you’re protecting them, right? So let me put it another way. Let’s at least get away from here. They’re going to come after me and Haruna or Yuu. At the very least, let’s try to move to a place where the normal humans won’t get involved.”

“Understood... I’ll take Hellscythe-dono, and you handle Haruna then.”

“Got it.”

Sera held Yuu in her arms, and I carried Haruna on my back as we ran.

“Hey! D-Don’t touch me in weird places!”

Don’t say unreasonable things... hm? I suddenly realized that something didn’t quite make sense here, and turned my head back a bit as I ran.

“Haruna, you don’t feel anything wrong?”

“Hueh? No, why?”

Even though that many Megalo had appeared, Haruna looked just as she always did. What was the meaning of that? Why wasn’t she trembling like usual and screeching “ukyaa!” or something?

Those things are fake Megalo.

Yuu showed that memo to me. I see... so those Megalo that seemed more menacing and not at all as cute as they usually looked were fakes? So Haruna was unaffected because of that?

Wait just a second. Where exactly did all those Megalo come from? Didn’t they appear right when that man who spoke in that disgusting way vanished?

... Were these Megalo created by that man?

“Yuu, that guy from before, can he make Megalo?”

Megalo need the souls of masou shoujo, which come to the same underworld as the souls of dead humans. He cannot make genuine Megalo. However, he may be able to make fakes with just the souls of humans.

Yuu seemed to also have the same opinion. Why exactly was this person making fake Megalo in such huge numbers? Now that she mentions it, I do remember that you could make Megalo with the souls of the dead. So that person gathered souls in order to make these Megalo... using Kyouko to do that.

But, why exactly did he have to go out and make such annoying thins?

“Ayumu, why did you stop running?”

I had gotten too distracted by thinking and had stopped.

Sera looked around for an escape route so that we wouldn't get surrounded.

“Haruna, do you know what the safest way to go is?”

“There are too many Megalo around us, so I don't know.”

Haruna held my bag for me and I chased after Sera. Haruna didn't seem to be able to hold the entire bag with all the stuffed animals in it, and the stuffed animals began to drop onto the ground. But I couldn't spare enough attention to care about that.

The Megalo continued to leap after us in pursuit. A flock of ladybug Megalo flew after us. Seriously, stop it with the giant bugs. That's really disgusting... it was like getting chased by a giant crowd of strawberries.

“Ayumu, that over there!”

Haruna faced the Megalo who were chasing after us and shouted. When I turned back, I saw a group of girls dressed in cute outfits. They were probably masou shoujo.

Did they come to exterminate the Megalo? That's a relief. This would buy us some time.

That's what I thought, but the masou shoujo also began to come towards us.

Huh? Why were they coming towards us?

They didn't seem to be going after Yuu or Sera. Which meant...

They were all aiming for me?!

Give me a damn break. Why were the masou shoujo also chasing after me?

Hold on. Maybe there was a reason for that.

Could it be... could it be the thing I was entrusted with by Dai-sensei? If that was something I couldn't even tell Haruna, then it would be something that masou shoujo would want, right?

So maybe that was also the cause of the Megalo headed in my direction.

If that were the case, I could at least understand why everyone was aiming for me.

"Haruna, don't you dare lose that schoolbag. I don't care what happens to the stuffed animals, but don't lose that bag."

"Hueh? ... Leave it to me!"

Ducking into a panicking crowd of humans, we ran off. At the sudden appearance of this huge parade of monsters, the shopping district had fallen into chaos. Don't panic that much. It's going to make me panic too, you know? The masou shoujo are going to make it all better soon, so just be quiet and duck out of the way.

Well, leaving that very zombie-like way of thinking aside, the district had degraded into pure pandemonium and the people scattered about like baby spiders.

But among those humans, there was one group who resolutely stood against the Megalo, and I knew one of the people in that group.

“Tomonori! Ah, or is it Yuki?”

“Can’t you just call me Mael now?!”

“You’re helping us? Aren’t you fighting against Sera?”

“Well even if you say that... I’m... your bride, after all.”

Tomonori scratched the tip of her nose. For some reason, at that moment Haruna began to tighten her grip on my neck.

“Hey, Ayumu, what did that girl just say? That she doesn’t have too much longer to live?”³⁶

“Mael Strom, you... hmm? What’s wrong, Hellscythe-dono?”

Sera looked at Tomonori with compassionate eyes, but then looked down her arms, at Yuu.

“Sera, what’s wrong?”

“Ah, nothing.” Taking a good look, I saw that Yuu was gripping strongly onto Sera’s clothes.

“Sera, for now let’s leave it to them and retreat.”

“If we fight together with the-“

“I have a reason. I can’t fight.”

If the cause of all this was my... or rather, the thing that Dai-sensei had given me, then there was no way I could let that be taken. So for now, the only way out was to run.

“..... I understand.” Looking at Yuu’s lonely-looking expression, Sera seemed to find her own reason not to fight. What a relief.

“Tomonori, I’ll leave the rest to you!”

“Yeah, get out of here fast, like you’re riding on a dreadnought-class

ship made out of mud!”³⁷

The tonkotsu-soup wielding girl who looked like a boy seemed very dependable at that moment. For instance, even if a boat were made of mud, if it were a huge dreadnought-class ship, it would be dependable too.

Carrying Yuu, Sera dashed towards that group of people clad in black mantles. The vampire ninjas quickly parted to the sides, opening up a path for us.

“Seraphim, you’ll owe me one for this.”

“Thank you for this.”

Even though Sera and Tomonori were supposed to be enemies, they smiled at each other. To vampire ninjas, the first priority was still probably the extermination of demons.

Tomonori and the other reform faction vampire ninjas were helping us out, so we got a bit more room to run away safely. We slipped into a narrow alleyway, and peeked back towards the road from the shadows.

Ahh, they’re starting.

The vampire ninjas and the crowd of Megalo collided. Black mixed with black into a single large mass. Red blood and white spheres flew into the air.

We turned our backs from that and tried to get a bit away from this place... but we stopped in our tracks.

Because we saw a single shadowy figure on the rooftop.

She looked like quite a cute girl.

She had a small body but a big chest. Her hair was tied back into twin tails, and she had red eyes with a black mantle. She gave us a mischievous, devilish grin. If we didn’t already know her true nature, we really might have thought that she was cute.

“... Kyouko.”

However, just seeing her smile disgusted me. After all, she was the person who had killed me.

Kyouko easily leapt down to us, and spread both her arms out as if trying to block our advance.

“It’s been a while, Aikawa-san. You seem healthy. That’s too bad.”

Was she also aiming for the thing Dai-sensei had given me?

“You people... what exactly are you trying to accomplish by making Megalo in huge quantities like this?”

At my question, Kyouko’s eyes widened. She let out a hum of admiration.

“We’re trying to look for a certain thing. Ahaha.”

She smiled. So she *was* going after what I had.

“I don’t have anything. Go look for it somewhere else.”

“Ahahahahaha!”

Kyouko laughed uproariously. She really didn’t have to laugh that hard...

“Aikawa-san. If you suddenly go and say that, then I can’t help but think that you do have it. I see, so Ariel-sensei entrusted it to Aikawa-san...”

Kyouko nodded a few times. I was really getting fed up with her pointless cute smiles.

“Ayumu, let’s go.”

“Ahh.” At Sera’s words, I began to put strength into my legs. I really wanted to get away from Kyouko as quickly as possible, but...

“So she couldn’t hand that weapon to a masou shoujo, could she? I see, I see. That’s why no matter how long we waited, things didn’t

go as we planned.”

Weapon? I stopped moving when I heard that word I really didn't want to hear.

“Dai-sensei wouldn't-“

“Ayumu, what did she give you? I didn't hear anything about that!”

Still on my back, Haruna had yelled out right next to my ear, so I tilted my head away from her and scowled.

“What exactly do you plan to do if you get that weapon?!”

Kyouko seemed like she was in quite a good mood, and spoke in an almost sing-song tone.

“If we just get Ariel-sensei's masou weapon, then we'll be able to do aaaaaany ridiculous thing we want to this world. We thought that if we made so many Megalo, she wouldn't have a choice but to use it, but she didn't use it at all and we were really puzzled~~.”

Granted, when Dai-sensei told me that she wanted to entrust me with something, it was when we were talking about the large amounts of Megalo appearing. So the reason that the Megalo were appearing was because of that dumb thing?

Ugh, this sort of pisses me off...

“My... fault.”

I heard Yuu's soft mumbling. She was holding her head and looked like she was in pain. Maybe it was just because she had talked, or maybe it was because she was regretting something.

... When she had fun, the people we least wanted to meet appeared. For Yuu, that was that man. For Haruna, that was the huge crowd of Megalo. Although, even normal humans probably didn't meet with those. As for me, the person I least wanted to meet was the person who had just appeared.

This was ridiculous. All these coincidences couldn't possibly be

Yuu's fault.

"Ayumu!"

At Sera's panicked yell, I turned around and saw some black thing hurtling at me. I quickly dodged to the side.

I thought it was some attack coming at me, but it was a vampire ninja. Perhaps he or she had been sent flying, but the vampire ninja rolled along the ground and knocked into the wall.

That vampire ninja got up, at which point she yelled out "Nyaaah!!" and looked in my direction.

Her short hair had become disheveled, and almost looked like a pair of nekomimi.

"Mael?"

"What the hell are up with those things?! They're so incredibly strong!"

"Of course. After all, you look incredibly weak."

Kyouko smiled. I felt my hatred increase a hundred-fold at the cute little guts pose she took up.

Being cute is great and all, but that didn't mean that you could get away with anything.

Until the day I die, I would probably continue to hate this person.

... Although, I guess I've already died.

"Ah? And which middle school do *you* go to?!"

Tomonori grabbed Kyouko's shoulder with a frown.

"Mael Strom!"

Sera called out Mael's name. She probably meant to communicate to her how dangerous it was to touch Kyouko. I agreed. ー

A tornado sprouted up, enveloping Tomonori. Compared with the tornadoes I had seen before, this one was absurdly big. The winds blew up dust everywhere. I turned my face away from the harsh winds. My hands were tied up holding Haruna up, so I had no choice but to look away.

In just a few moments, the tornado disappeared. Tomonori's mantle and school uniform were torn to shreds, and she had lost consciousness. She crumbled to the ground.

I couldn't do anything.

It was just a moment, and I couldn't... dammit!

"Mael! Hey! Yuki! Tomonori!"

No matter what name I called, she did not show any signs of getting up. Was she dead?

"Ayumu! It's coming!"

At Haruna's shout, I turned around and saw a gorilla Megalo clinging to the wall, spewing out a foul-looking purple smoke.

Did the fake Megalo catch up with us? This was just getting worse and worse. I guess there's no way out but to fight.

And without my masou renki? This is ridiculous.

I had broken her masou renki before, so Kyouko didn't have hers, and she also couldn't transform so I could probably do something about her... right? But as far as I could tell with that tornado, it almost seemed like she had gotten stronger.

But in either case, I couldn't deal with the Megalo. Even fighting one was asking a lot, but here they just kept coming.

Anyone... anyone, just help us.

At that point, a chill ran through me. It wasn't a chill that came through fear; it was honestly just a freezing chill.

Before my eyes, the road began to freeze over. The walls and buildings all froze.

What was this? Was this Kyouko's doing?

"Ahah... so you did have it. Ariel-sensei's masou weapon!"

Kyouko sounded surprised. There was frost falling at Kyouko's feet as well. So it was an attack that didn't discriminate between friend and foe?

Weapon? So this was the effect of the thing that Dai-sensei had entrusted to me, the thing that Kyouko was looking for?

Dai-sensei had entrusted this kind of weapon that just attacked anyone and everyone to me?

Give me a break. What exactly did I do? What exactly did I do to deserve such a...

Sera suddenly bound up onto the roof, and Kyouko soon followed after her. I just continued to feel the cold ground getting even colder, and panicked, not knowing what to do.

My shoes froze to the ground. The gorilla Megalo's limbs also began to freeze over.

"Haruna, just save yourself."

"What the hell are you saying?! Hurry up and run!"

Don't pull on my hair like that. That's exactly what I would have liked to do, but my ankles were already frozen.

What about Tomonori?

When I looked down to check, I saw that the ground around the collapsed form of Tomonori was already frozen.

At this rate, Tomonori was going to share the fate of those wooly mammoths encased in ice.

“Sera, save Mael!”

I called up onto the rooftop, but as if all the inorganic matter in the area had already frozen, her legs were already stuck to the roof.

So Sera couldn't even get away. The ice swiftly began to envelope my lower body.

“Haruna, just save-“

-

“Run!!”

-

A voice rang clearly through my mind.

Part 3

When I came to, I saw that everyone was in the entranceway to my house.

“Huh? I...”

Haruna looked around, clearly puzzled. Sera seemed to be thinking about something. And then, Yuu looked the same as she always did.

Something happened back there, didn't it? But nobody remembered anything.

“Yuu, did you do this?”

Everyone who was there in that place should now have returned to their original place.

I see. When you hear Yuu's voice, whatever you hear becomes true.

So what about Tomonori? Was she able to escape? Would Yuu's voice reach her if she had been unconscious?

“Why are we all here?”

“It seems that Hellsythe-dono somehow saved us all.”

“Hueh? How?”

“Everyone ran away. We did, and our enemies did too.”

I see. So when our enemies heard Yuu's voice, they also ran away. We were not the only people there. Kyouko and the Megalo, just like us, had gone back from where they came without any memory of what had happened.

That's terrifying. This once again reminded me why Yuu couldn't usually speak.

“You saved us, Yuu. We really couldn’t do anything back there.”

“Ayumu, for now, let’s go inside.”

“Yeah! I’m sorta hungry, you know?”

Haruna nodded vigorously. “Ahh, right!” she seemed to remember something and began to fish through my bag... what the hell is she trying to do?

“I got a whole, whoooooooole lot of candy from the arcade back there!”

She was acting like an excited elementary schooler on a field trip as she ransacked my bag and began to take out the stuffed animals and other things I had in it. Couldn’t we get into the house first at least? Don’t do that here, dammit.

“Ayumu, what’s this thing?”

Sera had discovered a plastic bag. It was the plastic bag Orito had given me.

“Ah! Myaybee Myaybee this is what Dai-sensei gave you?!”

I felt the blood drain from my face. Also, did she really just say “maybe” like that? Well, whatever.³⁸

It could very well be that the thing I had gotten from Orito was also this weapon of Dai Sensei’s.

If something like what had happened earlier happened again, that would be bad.

“Haruna! What do you think you’r-“

Haruna reached into the bag and tore its contents out into the open.

What came out of the bag was a book, and on the cover was a young, sexy woman smiling.

... A young, sexy, *naked* woman.

An ero book?! Well, if I opened that at school, I really would have died.

“Ayumu... you seriously are the worst!”

I could almost see flames shooting out of Haruna’s mouth as she began to come at me with an Argentine Backbreaker.³⁹

“Wait, Haruna! For guys, it’s really not that weird to have one or two-“

“Certainly that’s true. But the problem lies in the fact that you were walking on the street while carrying that.”

Yes, exactly.

“No, there’s a reason for-“

“I despise you.”

Will the day I’m not despised ever come?!

“Ayumu is seriously terrible. You H I J K EROEROERO!”⁴⁰

Haruna sighed and entwined my arms with her legs as she rode on my back. S-Seriously, stop that! It’s just a bit too pervy!

Haruna and Sera seemed exasperated, but only Yuu had on a lonely-looking expression.

This girl really was prone to emotional outbursts when that King of the Night character came out. Maybe something had happened between them in the past, but I didn’t know.

How sad her eyes looked... dammit! Could I really do nothing?! Could I only just stand here, get my arms bound by Haruna, and whack myself while begging for her to get off?

Yuu put her gauntlet-clad hand to the armor around her chest. She looked like she was lost in thought.

She was probably blaming herself for everything that happened.

“Yuu...” I called out Yuu’s name without even knowing what I was planning to say.

My body is not that perfect.

Ah, that’s what it was?

Part 4

The evening on the next day, I had been hard at work in the bathroom for over two hours.

“Ayumu! Get out! How long are you gonna stay in there?!”

She banged on the door, but I ignored her. Haruna, just shut up and wait there quietly for a bit.

“Just let me go in and finish! Come out just for a bit!!”

Hmm? I can’t hear you.

Stay calm, stay calm. This narrow, private room sure is peaceful, isn’t it?

“I’ll let that leaf woman cook!”

Ha ha ha. As if you will. If you did that, it wouldn’t be good for you either.

“Ah, also, your cell phone rang.”

“Tell me that earlier, dammit!”

I quickly flushed the toilet, and rushed out of the room while pulling up my trunks and jeans.

“H-Hey! Bayumu! Put your pants on before you come out! Ugh!”

Haruna covered her face with her hands. In place of her fingers, her ahoge pointed to my trunks.

“But Haruna was the one who told me to get out of the bathroom.”

“Hentai! Stop trying to be the king of hentai or something!!”

Haruna passed me and rushed into the bathroom with a “Kyaah!”

I washed my hands and hurriedly returned to the living room, and took my cell phone which was on the desk.

I was so overjoyed to see the number on my call history, which I had been anxiously waiting for, that I accidentally dropped the phone.

That number was from Matelis Magical Academy.

Finally...!

I picked up my phone and dialed back that very peculiar number.

“H-Hello!!”

“Thank you for your phone call. This is Matelis Magical Academy, Els speaking.”

That voice was not Dai-sensei’s voice. I felt my spirits drop immediately.

“Um, where’s Dai-sensei?”

“Ahh, do you mean Ariel-san? I had called you a bit earlier as Ariel-sensei’s representative, but...”

“Ah, I was away for a bit.”

“Do you have time to talk now? This will be quick.”

Ariel-sensei... that was Dai-sensei, right? Well, I’m relieved then. It looks like this was definitely the phone call I was waiting for.

“Yeah, right now is perfectly fine.”

“I’m sorry it took us so long to call you. It’s been a bit chaotic over here. Well then. First, well... first, has the particular item made it to you?”

“Probably... do you know what exactly the item is?”

“I’m not really sure... she told me that if I said ‘the particular item,’ you would know what I meant.”

What was the meaning of this? She didn't want Haruna to know about it, but she also didn't want this Els-san to know about it either?

"She's... umm, by your world's time... she's going to go pick it up from you at 2100 hours."

2100 hours? I knew what time it was right now, but just to check I took my cell phone away from my ear for a second and looked at the time.

"But the time reads 2300 right now..."

"A-Ahahaha..."

I really don't think this was a situation she could just cover up by laughing like that...

"The place was... the rave yard? Sorry, I forgot to take a memo."

"You mean the graveyard? I met her there before, so it could be that."

"Then it must be that place."

"I'll start heading over there right away."

"Please do. I honestly do apologize for the inconvenience I caused today. Well then, goodbye."

I cut off the phone call and hurried back to my room. Then, I lined up all the things that might have been this object Dai-sensei had wanted to give me.

-

A set of pervy glasses that let you see through clothing.

A bomb shaped like an orange, and a bomb shaped like a pencil.

An envelope with a piece of paper that had nothing written on it.

Lastly, an ero book.

-

Among those things was a weapon that attacked anything and everything...? I blankly stared at this all-too-strange lineup.

Which of these items was the item that Dai-sensei had wanted me to hold onto for her? Well, actually...

There was probably an eighty or ninety percent chance that it was the pervy glasses. There might have been a way to use those other than to see through clothing.

Well, if it really was a weapon, then it might have been the bombs, but those were Haruna's, so the possibility of that was pretty low.

Dai-sensei seemed to already have come to this world... or maybe she was gone already. But for now, maybe I should go to the graveyard and check.

What should I do? To be honest, I really didn't want to hold onto an item like this.

I wanted to live a peaceful, quiet life. If I had something like a weapon, every day would turn into a mysterious adventure.

Ah, right. Maybe Yuu would know where she was. Like she had known where Haruna was.

I headed for the living room, and found Yuu and Sera watching television with the same expression they always had on. I quickly asked Yuu whether Dai-sensei had come to this world, and she quickly tapped twice on the desk.

High probability that she is in the graveyard.

That was written on the memo. Was it really that easy to figure it out?

In any case, if she was in the graveyard, that's good. It was close by, after all. Maybe she had already been waiting there for me for two hours.

Masou shoujo were so multi-talented, but they didn't carry cell phones with them so it was so inconvenient to contact them...

"I'm going out for a bit."

I made that brief announcement and was about to leave the living room when I almost bumped into Haruna who had come out from the bathroom.

"Hueh? Where are you going?"

"Have to give something to Dai-sensei."

I briefly answered her and began to go up the stairs, but Haruna seemed a bit flustered.

"I-I'm also going."

"Oh?"

Haruna went back to her room and I returned to mine, and I quickly made the necessary preparations.

First, I checked that the black-rimmed glasses were secure in their case.

If I only took these glasses with me and figured out that they were the wrong thing, that wouldn't be good.

Alright, maybe I should just take all of them then.

While I'm at it, I'll drop by Orito's house too. I have to give him back this ero book.

I put the envelope and the glasses in my pocket, along with the pencil. The orange was too bulky for my pocket, so I put it in the plastic bag that the ero book had come in.

I knocked on Haruna's door, and Haruna appeared, fully changed.

"Well then, shall we go?"

"OK."

I carried the plastic bag, Haruna carried the chainsaw, and we left the house together.

Although, the graveyard was pretty close by, so it should be fine.

“Let’s hurry up a bit.”

I broke into a light run and took the shortest route I knew. When I turned at a corner and went through a narrow pathway, I realized that Haruna hadn’t followed me. I wasn’t running that fast either...

When I returned to the narrow pathway, I found Haruna walking towards me slowly.

“Are you alright?”

“A... Ayumu.”

I put my hand on Haruna’s forehead. It... felt hot.

“Wha-?! What are you doing?!”

Her face flushed red as well. Could she have caught a cold?

“Do you feel tired?”

“Idiot! I feel a Megalo close by!”

Haruna brushed aside my hand. She was just trying to act tough, wasn’t she?

So, a Megalo really did end up coming. They were fast. Did they really want these crazy, incomprehensible things that badly?

“... Wait just a second.”

I passed the plastic bag to Haruna, and in exchange took the chainsaw from her.

“What’s this?”

Haruna took a look inside the plastic bag, and let out a squeak of surprise. Well, that’s to be expected considering there was an

orange and an ero book in that bag.

“Don’t make me hold onto things like this!”

I ignored Haruna and took a few deep breaths. I started to chant. In the usual case, I didn’t want to transform until I had no other choice. However, I couldn’t be like that this time.

Because this time, it might not end with just Megalo.

“Nomobuyo, woshi, hashitawa, dokeda, gunmiicha, dei, ribura.”

Getting used to things is the work of the devil. The person who coined the phrase “well, there’s no other way” was also the devil too. At this point, even if I changed into this outfit I... no, sorry. I still haven’t gotten used to it. No matter how many times I experienced this, I could never think of it as normal.

In any case, I wiped away my tears and headed out into the main roadway, wanting to go somewhere with more room to move.

Alright, come at me! As soon as I thought that, one Megalo appeared.

Alright. If it’s only one Megalo, I’ll deal with this quickly.

If it’s only one...

“Let’s run, Haruna.”

“Hueh? You’re not going to beat it?”

“If it’s just one, I’d like to, but in those numbers I really can’t get involved.”

Haruna looked back, but I took her hand and began to run.

The Megalo noticed our presence, and let out feral roars as they began to head our way.

I could hear their war cries echo behind me.

Even if I didn’t turn back and look, I could imagine what it looked

like behind me.

Should I call it a parade? Or no, it was more like a forest full of animals whom had just sensed an impending earthquake.

All four lanes in the road were filled full of these almost-countless number of school-uniform-wearing animals.

It was everyone for himself. Imbued with that primitive instinct, the Megalo even began fighting amongst themselves.

Were they not allies? Maybe in that mass there were fake Megalo that Kyouko had made as well as real Megalo that had come from the underworld? Maybe the fake Megalo that Kyouko and them had made were also unwanted existences to the real Megalo?

At this rate, maybe I could still shake them off.

I could then hear the sound of many things running.

I didn't mean the sound of cars or motorcycles.

They were the sound of feet. It was the sound of animal feet pounding into the ground.

Then, the sound of crumbling buildings.

Those Megalo were the ferocious Megalo I had seen before. You couldn't even say they were going after the masou shoujo; rather, they went after and destroyed everything without discrimination.

"Ayumu! There are a crazy number coming!"

"I know!"

I saw cars that were coming from the far side of the road suddenly doing U-turns and heading back the way they came.

I wonder what this spectacle must have looked like to ordinary humans.

Did it look like a mass escape from the zoo? A costume parade?

Some movie shoot? It probably didn't look like any of those. The Megalo were crazed with fury and were destroying all the buildings around them as they raged forwards.

I could understand why those people wanted to turn back once they saw all this.

I heard the sounds stop. Maybe they stopped chasing us...?

I took a glance behind me... what the hell. It was...

It was way worse than I thought!

The Megalo had soared high up into the sky, and were flying right towards us.

I grit my teeth and ran as fast as I could. My masou shoujo outfit fluttered disgustingly in the wind.

"Unyah!" Haruna's legs got tripped up.

I see. If there were that many Megalo chasing us, then it was probably hard for her to move very well. I grabbed her hand firmly and pulled her to me.

"Ah-..." Haruna spoke softly, so I put my guard up and looked around.

"What's wrong?"

"Ahh... umm... it's nothing."

Haruna had stopped, but she soon began to move her feet again.

We turned right at the crossroads. If we continued this way, we would have arrived at the graveyard. We would have arrived, but...

We had to take a detour.

Because right in front of us, we saw vampire ninjas battling with Megalo. Geez, the problems just didn't stop coming!

After proceeding straight, we had no choice but to take a right at

the next opportunity.

I looked all around me to gain an understanding of where we were before breaking out into a run.

I tried to take the next turn, but more Megalo were blocking the way. Fine, fine. I guess I have to go straight.

Dammit, can I turn at the next corner? No, I can't. This time there were masou shoujo there.

I thought that the Megalo had appeared to chase us down, but it seems that the battle had already started earlier. Dammit, there's nowhere left to run.

"Ayumu..." Haruna looked at me with anxious eyes.

"Don't stop. If you need to think, think while we're moving. If we can meet up with Dai-sensei, we should be able to deal with this all even if there are so many of them."

"Well, if it's Dai-sensei, she should be able to deal with it in a single attack!"

A single attack, huh... was she really that strong?

Keeping a lookout in front of and behind me, I proceeded straight. I didn't have too much time to think.

There were masou shoujo in front of me, and Megalo and vampire ninjas behind me. There were also Megalo on the right. How many of them were going to come after us?!

What kind of amazing thing was this item?! What should I do? Which path should I choose?

"Ayumu! To the right!"

Yeah, that's true. That seemed to be the easiest path. But, I still tried to look for a better way out.

Vampire ninjas... Megalo... masou shoujo. Right, front, behind. On

our left, there were just buildings on the other side of the road.

“Going right is no good.”

“Then let’s go back and then go right.”

“No way. We have to go strai-“

“That’s not going to work! What about left?”

“No good. Even if we put distance between us we can’t fight them all. We definitely need to get Dai-sensei...”

“But if we go right, Dai-sensei will definitely be there!”

“Since when has anything ever been ‘definite’ in this world?”

“Masou-shoujo are definite!”

“In any case, we have to go right.”

No, there was still another choice. We were getting messed up because we were trying to stick to the roads.

Up! Up into the sky, where there are no obstacles! I kicked off the ground and leapt into the air.

With the power of the masou shoujo, it was an easy task for me to fly. And in the sky, there were no such things as walls.

I suddenly felt like I could run anywhere I wanted, but I saw the Megalo and vampire ninjas going up onto the roofs as well.

As I thought, they were chasing us.

Even then, it would be pretty hard for them to fence us in if we were in the sky.

However, by the time I had realized that, I had already wasted too much time. And there were plenty of people who had the same idea as I did. The skies were already locked down.

Dammit! I thought I had a good idea too!

Bird-like Megalo charged at me, and I fell back down to the ground.

Well, if they were going to ambush us like that, we had no choice. Yeah, at this point, we had no other choice.

“Ayumu! Are you alright?”

I had turned myself towards the ground to protect Haruna from the impact, and she pulled me up.

“Other than this outfit, yeah I’m fine.”

There were various types of animals around us. I broke out into an all-out run. I just kept straight, didn’t even look left or right, and ran with all my heart.

We almost got caught by the masou shoujo, but I spun to the side and evaded them. We collided into a few vampire ninjas and almost tripped, but somehow broke through, and slipped between the legs of a huge Megalo.

The graveyard wasn’t that far from my house... but today, it seemed miles and miles away.

“Ayumu! They’re coming!”

I didn’t even have to look back, but Haruna let me know what was going on. I just held Haruna’s hand tight and moved forwards.

“Haruna... you...”

“Hm? S’wrong?”

I would expect Haruna to be shivering with fear right now, but for some reason she seemed she was having fun.

Like when we were almost bitten by a wolf Megalo and just barely managed to jump out of the way.

Like when we evaded the sword of a vampire ninja and together kicked away a Megalo who was standing in our path.

Through it all, she was smiling from ear to ear.

Part 5

The graveyard was just a bit away. After we had dodged and gotten past the Megalo, we got back to the narrow roadway.

It was a roadway that was so narrow that cars would have trouble passing through it. And if we went a bit on that roadway, we would arrive at the cemetery.

However, luck would have it that our greatest obstacle would be waiting for us on that final stretch to our goal.

“Good evening, Aikawa-san. What may you be doing in a place like this?”

A cute, long-haired, twin-tailed girl with a young face and largish breasts stood right in the middle of that narrow road with a full-fledged smile across her face.

“I should be asking you the same question.”

Haruna hid behind my back, and I looked around. Kyouko was the only enemy I could see.

“Let’s go, Haruna.”

“Hueh? O-Okay!”

I had paused for a moment, but I began to brazenly move forwards.

“You have Ariel-sensei’s secret weapon, don’t you? I also checked, and she’s waiting for you up ahead.”

I didn’t have time to talk. I swung the chainsaw downwards.

Even for Kyouko, the attack of a masou renki was still probably a threat. She had lost to me once before, so I expected her to dodge. And just as I had expected, Kyouko stepped to the side, giving Haruna an opportunity to slip past her.

However, a Megalo came and pinned Haruna down. That Megalo hadn't been there before either...

So did the Megalo catch up with us? That's not good... there was no way I could fight with the Megalo while dealing with Kyouko.

I flung Kyouko towards the Megalo that was holding onto Haruna. The Megalo took his hands off Haruna and caught Kyouko as she flew towards him. He held gently onto Kyouko in his arms and let her down.

That Megalo seemed like one of the fake ones.

At that opportunity, with the quick-wittedness of a cat, Haruna came back to me on all fours. She didn't look frightened at all.

"I have to thank Aikawa-san."

Kyouko chuckled like Dai-sensei, and summoned up a tornado.

"That time, you destroyed my wooden sword, and because of that I came to learn how to control these tornados."

Kyouko turned the tornado into a sword. It wasn't straight, and it wasn't the same length as a sword, but she was holding the tornado like one would hold a sword.

I held my chainsaw aloft. If I wanted to cut her down, I had to get a bit closer.

Kyouko lightly swung the tornado to the side.

No matter how I looked at it, there was no way that swing could reach me. However, I felt a chunk of my flesh got gouged out of my side.

Could that sword stretch out?

Like a whip, the tornado came at me with very irregular motions. When it touched me, it didn't leave a cut. Rather, it gouged me out as if something had taken a bite out of me. They were attacks I really couldn't defend against.

I could say that I really wouldn't recommend a tornado diet.

Kyouko hadn't transformed into a masou shoujo, and her movements seemed different and slower than they were before.

I took one step closer, and Kyouko took one step back. When I took another step forward, the Megalo came at me with an attack.

What a bother. I repelled the Megalo back, and searched around for a way out of this situation.

"Ayumu, if we stay around here the situation is just going to get worse."

"I know that."

"I have an idea. Ayumu, you distract those two."

"As usual, you're just asking a lot... by the way, aren't you scared?"

"Well, that thing... he feels sort of like a Megalo... but he also feels sort of different."

She still didn't realize that? It seemed that Haruna hadn't listened to a single word of the conversation that Kyouko and I had a few days ago. She seriously just ignored anything that she wasn't interested in.

"I see. But having to fight both Kyouko and that Megalo..."

"What are you saying? You can't do it?"

"Well, having to deal with them both..."

"Even if it's for me?"

"... Suddenly I feel like I can do it."

"Right?" Haruna gave me a satisfied smile.

"... Ayumu, there's something I want to say to you."

Haruna muttered quietly.

“This is pretty embarrassing and I really didn’t want to say this....”

Stop playing it up. I kept my eyes looking straight and only half-listened.

“But if I don’t say it now, I feel like I’ll never say it.”

It did seem like it was more important than I had expected, so I glanced at Haruna.

“You know, I...”

Her cheeks were flushed and she averted her gaze. She looked quite embarrassed and I could feel her breath on my skin. My heart began to beat faster and faster.

What are you thinking, looking like that? It really makes me feel weird.

And then, she resolved herself and spoke without any regret.

“... I want to go to the bathroom.”

“Ah, I feel the same way.”

This was definitely not the first time I’ve felt so relieved and so disappointed all at once.

I launched into a blind charge at Kyouko. Another Megalo had shown up and was blocking our path, but I ignored him.

Kyouko leapt backwards while sending tornado attacks at me, so I threw my chainsaw at Kyouko. And then, without chasing the chainsaw down, I pushed the Megalo up against the wall.

Throwing that chainsaw probably got Kyouko nervous. She suddenly flew upwards to dodge the chainsaw, but she didn’t realize that Haruna was right there behind her.

Haruna threw something at her from the back. Kyouko instinctively tried to cut the projectile down with her tornado.

The orange lightly danced in the air.

Kyouko's eyes opened wide, and her mouth hung open in a silent surprise.

She was a masou shoujo, so she probably knew.

Knew that this orange... was a bomb.

An explosion rang through the air. Covering my eyes to shield them from the flash, I ran to take back my chainsaw.

The explosion was smaller than I had expected. I doubt Kyouko had suffered any major damage from something like that. However, it was a chance. We had to use this gap in her attention.

I took Haruna's hand, wove my way through the Megalo, and broke through. Like that, we finally arrived at the graveyard.

And in that graveyard which acted as a second home to zombies, the usual silence was broken by huge number of Megalo and monsters. What kind of monster show was this?!

There were enough Megalo over the place that the scene reminded me of what a video game shop looked like on the day a new Dragon Quest went for sale.

Perhaps it was true that spiritual entities like Megalo would like spiritual places like graveyards? They came from the underworld, so were they undead monsters like me?

Well, whatever. Let's just move forwards.

I eluded a Megalo who swung his arms down at us, using the back of a dog Megalo as a stepping stone to leap into the air. Haruna's leg was caught by a Megalo who reached his arms out in front of him, almost like a zombie would.

I landed back down on the gravel and punched the Megalo flying. I grabbed Haruna and held her in my arms, leaping back up into air... when I passed by her.

A girl wearing a torn-up black mantle.

One of her two twin-tails was loose. Kyouko gave me a bold smile and snatched the plastic bag that Haruna was holding onto.

“It’s this, isn’t it? Ariel-sensei’s trump card. Well then, Aikawa-san. Goodbye.”

Kyouko looked very satisfied as she went off.

I stared in blank amazement at her. Words like “shit” and “dammit” didn’t come to mind.

If I recall correctly, the thing left in that plastic bag was...

-

... It was the ero book, wasn’t it?

-

“Ayumu! Over there!”

I looked where she pointed and saw a twin-tailed girl wearing a white, laced coat holding swords in both hands and dancing about. Well, it might have looked like a dance, but she was actually fighting.

It was a very rhythmical-looking dance of swords.

Everyone around her, as if they were just mannequins or extras in a sword-fight movie scene, just got easily cut down. White particles flew in the air constantly in the area around Dai-sensei.

“She’s pretty amazing.”

“Obviously. She’s Dai-sensei, after all.”

“Dai-sensei!”

I called out to her, and Dai-sensei turned in our direction.

“Oh my, is that Ayumu-san~~? Did you come to help me fight~?”

She was surrounded by enemies, but her arms continued to dance and she laughed without running out of breath.

“Yeah, for now, before we talk.”

“We need to take out the garbage, ya know?!”

“Haruna, you picked just the right time to come~. Could I ask you to erect a barrier~? This is getting quite annoying here.”

Dai-sensei chuckled as she waved her swords about. At Dai-sensei's words, Haruna hopped up and down in excitement.

“You're going to use that?! Yeah?! That's great!”

What? What is she going to use?

“Ayumu, stay behind me.”

“You sure seem really happy.”

“I'm excited! Dai-sensei is going to show us her magic! This is probably the first time she's used her magic in this world.”

Magic, huh? Haruna put both her hands in front of her, and they emitted a ruby-colored light. More light came from her hands than I had ever seen before... was she planning to erect that big of a barrier?

“Neyo, Dashima, Gauhonokaugo, Nokugoja, Jireko, Isadakute, Nanimizu, Shikegan, Semaiza, Gokewashi, Umoni, Tokomayo, Modonomoka, Roonote, Besenzenga.”⁴¹

Dai-sensei mumbled what almost sounded like a song. Haruna synchronized with her and erected a huge barrier. What a long chant that was. Was her magic really that amazing?

“Burn to ashes! Dragon's Crimson!”

At that second, I saw a flame. Like a tornado, like a pillar of fire, that flame rose up into the heavens from the ground and burned the Megalo up.

The sky was lit up as if it was midday. This was no boy scout's campfire.

I heard an explosion of sound from that hard-to-describe fire. Like sand castles being battered down, the Megalo crumbled to the ground.

"Soooo pretty~~." Haruna's eyes were sparkling. The Megalo began to turn to white particles one after another, and a few even tried to run away.

In just a few seconds, what had looked like a school-wide assembly of uniform-wearing Megalo had been reduced to nothing at all. I couldn't see a single Megalo left.

..... Wait wait wait wait. She seriously did it in one attack?

She's way too strong. To the point where it was ridiculous to even think about fighting her with my bare hands.

Was this the real power of masou shoujo? Please don't ever use that again. At least not in this world.

"... So what was the barrier all about?"

"That magic just noooow~~ things get hot and other people could have died~. And I can't erect a barrier and use attack magic at the same time."

Well, I guess if that much fire ignited close by, anybody would have died from the heat. I see, so that's why Megalo that didn't even come into contact with the fire ended up burning up.

"As expected from Dai-sensei! I should just start calling you Chou-sensei! Yeah!"⁴²

Haruna's ahoge jumped back and forth. She seemed just brimming with admiration.

"Ah, thank you thank you~~."

“Oh, right. Dai-sensei, this... huh?”

I tried to take the glasses out, but I realized that I was still in my masou shoujo outfit. The things that I had wanted to hand over were in my trousers. If I didn't dispel my transformation, I wouldn't be able to take them out.

Well, the Megalo were dealt with and Dai-sensei was also here, so I guess it's alright if I did that.

I tried again, taking the glasses and the envelope out of my pocket and looking at Dai-sensei with questioning eyes.

“What are those?”

Whaaa~~? So the ero book was the right one? ... No, there's no way that's true.

“Well, I wanted to come here to hand you the things you had entrusted to me...”

“Where is it~? I don't see it anywhere~. My my, Ayumu-san~~.”

Dai-sensei waved her hands at me, as if telling me to stop with the joking.

“But Kyouko was going after me up until a little while ago... don't tell me the weapon was really the ero book?”

“Ayumu-san. How exactly did you plan to use a dirty book as a weaponnn~? Ayumu-san is so ecchiii~~.”

Dai-sensei covered her lips with her hand and laughed. I felt my face heating up and I tried desperately to explain.

“Kyouko was after the weapon, you see. And then, you see, she stole the ero book I had a bit ago.”

Flustered, I tried to explain the situation, when Dai-sensei suddenly began to look serious.

“Could it beeee... that all these fake Megalo appearing is Kyouko's

doing~~?”

I could hear a hint of fierce anger beneath her otherwise carefree tone.

“Yes. She told me herself. So you realized they were all fake?”

“Yes. Megalo, you knooow, they aren’t that weak~~. There were people in Virie who said that this was happening because our Megalo extermination plans were found out by the enemy~. But you knooow, just running wild like that to stop our experimentation plans, that’s just not like the Megalo at all~~. I really just couldn’t convince myself that the higher-ups were right~~.”

“So if Kyouko was the cause of it all, that would convince you?”

“That girl knows my pla- **ahem**... I could see that girl thinking that I would use the masou weapon, so if she was aiming for that then I would be convinced~~.”

Haruna, who had been patiently listening up until that point, picked that point to speak up.

“Hey! What are you talking about?! You’re not allowed to talk about things I don’t know!”

Haruna waved her hands around almost as if she was doing squats, and then repeatedly made a cross with her arms.

“Haruna, we’re talking about something imp-“ “Shut up!”

“Haruna-“ “I told you to shut up, didn’t I?!”

... Just great.

“Dai-sensei, why did you not tell me and give Ayumu the mission?!”

Haruna was indignant. However, Dai-sensei responded with a nonchalant expression.

“I didn’t want anybody from Virie to know about it~.”

“Why?! And why Ayumu?!”

“Even if Ayumu-san knew it was a weapon, he wouldn’t use it. Also~~, he’s easy to contact. And more than anything... he’s the person who put Haruna under a spell, so I thought he would be dependable~~~.”

“Start talking in a way I understand!”

“You’re a genius, but you still don’t understaaaand~~?”

Dai-sensei chuckled. “Hnnngg....” Haruna groaned and couldn’t say anything back. Dai-sensei seemed to really know how to deal with Haruna.

“Dai-sensei is an idiot! She’s a genius idiot!”

If the phrase “genius idiot” really existed, then I can’t imagine anyone fitting that better than Haruna.

“You cool idiot! Strong idiot! Amazing idiot!”

“They say that the weakest dogs howl the loudest, don’t they~~?”

Haruna looked like she was struck by lightning. Ahh, she seriously looks shocked.

I tried to restrain myself but couldn’t help but laugh, and Haruna’s face flushed deep red.

“Well then, I’ll be on my way baaack~~. Ayumu-san, thank you for your hard work~~. Is there anything you want from me before I gooo~??”

“Ah, please just stand there for a second.”

I felt like I was speaking a line from a bad movie chase scene, but I wanted to reward myself for the terrible ordeal I had been through that day... so I put on those black-rimmed glasses.



Part 6

After the Megalo had been safely extinguished, Dai-sensei returned to the magic world Virie. I returned home with Haruna, who had gotten into quite a foul mood.

Haruna just continued to mumble “Ugh, geez...” and her ahoge jumped to and fro.

For Haruna, it was probably humiliating to feel like the person left out of the conversation.

“Ayumu, why didn’t you tell me?!”

“Because I was told not to tell you.”

“Not telling me is a serious crime, you know?!”

What crime exactly? Haruna let out a final cry of frustration, and held out a small hand towards me.

“Dai-sensei, that idiot...”

Even though Dai-sensei was already gone, Haruna still muttered that. She looked quite lonely right then, an expression you might expect from a graceful young lady.

“I wonder what I am to Dai-sensei...”

What was wrong with her? That troubled expression really didn’t suit her well. Haruna looked up at me with a depressed expression.

“Ayumu...” she started, but she suddenly fell into silence. And then she averted her gaze.

“Haruna, is there something bothering you? You can tell me anything, you know.”

“It’s nothing...”

"It'll feel better if you tell me. At least, I feel you're the kind of person who would feel better after that."

"So, if I told you, you'd do it?"

Do what? Is there something she wanted? The things that Haruna wanted always made my head ache... but I guess just this once, I'd try to do my best to fulfill her wishes.

"Alright, just one thing then."

"Then, I want you to... with me..." she didn't make eye contact and seemed really flustered.

"No, I won't say it!"

Why not?! I was getting a bit pissed off here...

"Just say it! I'll do whatever it is!"

"Kiss me!"

..... Huh?

"Kissu? It's the name of a transparent, light-yellowish brown class of fish, usually referring to the Japanese whiting--"

"Shut up!"

"....."

"You're going to kiss me! I told you that's what I want, right?! Alright?!"

She closed her eyes and puckered her soft-looking lips in my direction. You know, when she puts it like that, I could feel my chest tightening a bit.

"Haruna, do you really understand what you're asking me to do?"

"Are you taking me for an idiot?"

"Why do you want me to kiss you?"

“I won’t let you only kiss that girl!”

That girl? Could it be that she was worrying about that time I had kissed Tomonori? It was Haruna’s fault that had happened too...

I started to tell her that, but...

-

“I won’t lose to someone like that!”

-

She was looking up at me with an expression that I knew wouldn’t take no as an answer.

“Alright, I got it.”

With that short response, I closed my eyes and stuck out my lips.

And then, I suddenly recalled this sensation.

Yes, this sensation that I had felt before.

The sensation of the tip of a sneaker boring into my cheek.

When I came to, I was twirling in midair.

It’s been quite a while since I’ve taken one of Haruna’s kicks at full force.

“You idiot! Don’t take that so seriously!”

Whaaaa~?? Wasn’t. This. Just. A. Bit. Unreasonable?

The world whirled around me in slow motion.

In one corner of my vision, I could see Haruna giving me a boyish smirk. At that moment, what filled my heart wasn’t frustration, but for some reason was a clear sense of relief.

Yes, this was definitely more of the Haruna I knew.

Part 7

Yuu was standing in front of my house. I wonder if she was waiting for us to return?

“Hey gloomy necromancer, what are you doing here?”

Dinner. = “I wanted to eat some dinner, but...”

“Ah, Yuu, so you couldn’t wait?”

Yuu shook her head back and forth, and handed me a memo.

I was not the one who couldn’t wait.

Haruna seemed to not know what was going on, but I had a gut instinct as to what Yuu meant.

We headed to the living room, where today’s final test was waiting for us.

The meaning of that memo... and the reason Yuu had gone out of the house to evade danger. Those things had led me to one ominous premonition.

Unfortunately, that premonition was on the mark.

“So you’ve finally come back. Things are getting cold, you know.”

There was already food lined up on the table.

The moment Haruna went into the living room, she let out a “uwaaah~,” sounding just like Hikomaro⁴³. “It’s food.....” she continued in a tone of despair. I leaned in and whispered into Haruna’s ear.

“Just leave this to me. You go into the kitchen.”

“O-Okay.”

Having grasped the situation, Haruna took Yuu with her into the kitchen. Please hurry. If you can get some proper cooking out, then we can ignore Sera's food.

There was mis soup and a black clod set on the table. What kind of cooking was that supposed to be? Meat dumplings? They were round, jet-black spheres about the sizes of marbles. Once again, she managed to make something that was completely undecipherable.

But seeing how happy Sera seemed to be, it was hard to just tell her to get rid of this. Yuu also probably felt the same way. That's why she had left her seat and was waiting for us outside, wasn't it?

Seeming worried that I had been the only person who had come to the living room, Sera frowned and cocked her head to the side.

"What happened to those two?"

"Ahh, I'm so hungry. I want to eat it all."

Ignoring her, I sat in front of the table and gulped. Of course, I had gulped out of fear, but to Sera it might have looked like I was gulping because of how delicious I thought the food looked.

She was showing me an absurdly nice smile right now. She sure does like cooking, doesn't she?

"I-Is that so? If Ayumu thinks so, then I guess there's no use arguing about it."

"So, what's this black thing?"

"Fried chicken⁴⁴. It's my sudden death recipe, black fried chicken."

... This wasn't just burned, was it?

"I used a depleted uranium mesh to make it like that."

It wasn't just burned!

How exactly did she manage to get fried chicken to form perfect little spheres like this...?

Haruna, move faster! It seems that this really was a sudden death recipe!

“Ayumu, please dig in.”

I closed my eyes and tried to pick up a piece with my chopsticks, but it was too slippery and I couldn't get a hold on it. So finding no other option, I tried to stab it with a chopstick, but I heard a cracking noise and a piece of the chopstick chipped off.

Ugh! That was quite some armor!

There was no way I could bite into something like this.

My hands shook in fear. I used my hands and picked up one piece of the chicken. As if I was preparing to swallow a sword, I turned my head up and dropped that piece into my mouth... or rather, down into my throat.

And that was the last thing I remembered.

END CHAPTER 3

Chapter 4 – I'd Rather Die than Kiss You

(The first step to being a good wife is knowing how to make good fried chicken!)



Tornadoes aren't fair. That's how the world worked. Yes, tornadoes were just impossible to deal with.

It was really sudden, you know? There wasn't anything I could do against something like that.

well, just take a look. I'm definitely really strong, you know.

Well, certainly, I was done in by a single attack. And I even lost consciousness.

But I'm really strong, I'm telling you. Come on, believe me!

After all, I'm a vampire ninja, I'm Ayumu's wife, and the truth is I'm also- (cut out due to spoilers).

Part 1

I was lying on my bed.

How long had I been unconscious? My arms and legs still worked. My head felt a bit dizzy, but it was no big deal.

However, my body felt a bit sluggish. It felt as if I had a cold.

I faced upwards and relaxed my body. My body really wanted to sleep, but it seemed that once I had woken up, my brain didn't want to go back to sleep anymore. Just completely not being able to sleep was really harsh.

Well, I guess... this was a pretty *definite* proof that Sera's cooking just couldn't be eaten.

I felt a cool sensation on my forehead.

I opened my eyes slightly, and I saw a gauntleted hand above me.

"Yuu... were you nursing me back to health?"

In response to my words, Yuu took off her gauntlet. Panicking a bit, I stopped her from exposing her white, frail hands to me.

"Wait wait! I don't need you to heal me."

Certainly, if Yuu touched people with her bare hands, she had the ability to take injuries that they wanted to heal and transfer those injuries onto herself. And she had waited for me to wake up because she probably couldn't use her ability on people who weren't conscious. It was probably important for the person himself to want to heal the injury.

"What happened with Sera's food?"

Haruna threw it out without mercy.

I see. I could almost see Sera's depressed face in my head.

Sera cried.

"She cried... was she really that depressed? And how was Haruna's cooking?"

It was delicious.

... I see. What happened to my portion then?

"Yuu, sorry, but could you call Haruna here for me?"

I sounded almost like a mosquito with how low I was speaking. But I couldn't do any better.

Yuu gave me a single nod, stood up, and left the room.

I gave a huge, long sigh, and placed an arm on my forehead. To think that a zombie could faint...

The door opened with a bang, and Haruna appeared with her ahoge bouncing up and down.

In the next moment, Haruna jumped onto the bed and her body pressed right into mine. All the air in my lungs whooshed out at the impact.

"Haruna..." I looked at her angrily.

"Hey, you're alive."

Haruna laughed and sat up on top of me. She was mounting me like she would a horse.

"Ah..." I made a bit of a sound. There was a tiny, tiny pair of breasts in front of my eyes. Haruna had leaned in towards me, and I could see her "breasts" through a gap in her shirt.

Hnnghh... I might be a zombie, but I was still a mammal. I was weak when it came to breasts.

My face unconsciously heated up. There wasn't that much to be

seen there... but even so, I could feel my heart fluttering. I knew it was summer, but... at least wear a damn bra.

“So small...”

Haruna reacted when she heard me mumble that. And then, she realized her body’s position and where I was looking, her ahoge stood straight up, and she blushed crimson.

“You hentai! Eroward Eroric!”⁴⁵

What kind of alchemist was that supposed to be? I put my hands together in a praying position, and brought my fists down on her.

“Well, I actually meant that as a compliment.”

“Ayumu, you idiot! Y-You don’t have to put every single thing into words!”

That was a fully-justified insult, and I couldn’t say anything in return. Haruna jumped up and down, and I could feel my insides getting crushed more and more.

But I’m glad. It seemed that she had returned to her old self. She was probably satisfied after she had gotten all her fuzzy feelings out into the open. My own feelings had nothing to do with it.

She was happy with just spitting out what she had wanted to get out.

“So, where’s my dinner?”

“Hm? Ahh, I’ll go bring it, so wait just a bit.”

Haruna went out and Yuu came back in, sitting on her knees right next to the bed. Her blue eyes gazed straight at my face, and her gauntleted hand covered mine.

I usually wouldn’t think too much of this situation, but because Haruna had done those strange things, I felt a bit strange every time Yuu touched my skin.

I wonder what Yuu thought of me...

I blushed a bit and looked away, when Haruna suddenly came back into the room carrying something strange, and I couldn't help but turn my gaze in her direction.

Yuu took one look at the thing Haruna was carrying before she went back to watching my face.

"What the hell is that...?"

I knew all too well what it was that Haruna had brought in. I could understand why it was, but I had no idea why it was here.

"What is it? It's bamboo, of course."

"Well, no, I can see that much. The problem is what exactly you're planning on doing with that..."

"What I'm planning to do... I'm just planning to set it up, of course."

"Set it up..."

The bamboo pole was split in half, and Haruna used it to form a bridge between me and my bookcase.

Was that bamboo left over from Tanabata? Exactly how many of those did she end up snatching?

And then, Sera appeared. She was carrying a tray, on which I could see a pot. Don't tell me... that while I was out, she went and did more cooking...?

"I cooked some rice porridge. Please, eat some."

She did more cooking! Come on, someone stop her! Someone stop the person who got me here in bed like this in the first place!

"I made some too! I'm going to start flowing it down, alright?!"

At Haruna's words, I started to think about the current setup in my

room.

Right now, there was a bamboo pole cut in half, going from my bookshelf to me almost like a slide.

It was expertly fixed, and set up perfectly so that it couldn't move at all.

And then, the splendidly cut end of the bamboo pole on my side, which was probably done by Sera, was facing towards my face.

... Don't tell me... don't tell me...

... Doesn't this look like a setup for flowing wheat noodles?⁴⁶

Huh? Wait, why am I also fixed to the bed? When did this... dammit, I can't move at all! Everything below my neck was fixed to the bed with wires or something!

Haruna got on top of a chair. Sera passed the pot to Haruna. Looking up at that display, Yuu seemed to be thinking the same thing I was thinking and heartlessly moved away from me.

"Well, if youz is ready, here I go!"

What the hell was up with that dialect?⁴⁷

"Wait! Stop that right now!"

I tried to pick my upper body up, but Sera had a green-colored sword gripped in her hand.

"Are you saying that you can't eat my cooking? Even though I tried so very, very, very hard to make it for you?"

"I'm really grateful for that, but umm... do you plan to chop my head off?"

"If the need arises."

But if you do that, none of the food is going to reach my stomach...

"Hm? ... It's not flowing down."

Giving the bamboo a short glance, I saw that the rice porridge was stuck in the middle.

“Umm... I do apologize but, is there any way you could just feed it to me?”

“We’re trying to feed it to you right now, aren’t we?”

“No no, I mean feed it to me properly with a spoon or something...”

“We’re using bamboo.”

“I apologize for repeating myself, but please use something more ‘proper’...”

“Don’t worry! We’re using proper bamboo!”

I give up!

“Did you really think we would fawn over you and feed you like that?”

I mean, I finally get to live with bishoujo... so can’t they at least make my dreams come true when I’m frazzled or in pain?

“Sera, at least tell me what ingredients you used. What did you put in the rice porridge?”

“Ayumu, how much do you plan to mock me? Maybe we should try flowing the porridge down right into your throat?”

“No, I didn’t mean to mock you. I just want to know.”

“Geez... since when do people have to spell out all the ingredients in their cooking? There was rice, and water... well, I used a bit of mortar as a secret ingredient, but... it’s not like the ingredients are pesticide-free, so I didn’t use CGs either.”

Well then, use CG... wait, use pesticide-free ingredients, dammit! That was close! I almost got taken for an idiot there! The important point here wasn’t CGs or whatever!

“Haruna, what exactly is mortar?”

“Eh? Umm... well, it’s that, I think. Yeah, it’s that.”

Haruna didn’t seem to know what it was. It must’ve been something from this world.

Tap tap. I got tapped on the shoulder. Hm? Yuu seems to know what it was.

It’s the thing you get when you add water to cement. =

“Mortar... well.. it’s something like concrete, I think?”

... What. I don’t know if I should scream or struggle here. Or maybe just run.

No, I should probably scream. But my voice was just too weak.

Come on, Ayumu, think. Think of something! ... *Ding!* Right, that’s what I can do!

“I really want to try Haruna’s rice porridge first, I think.”

I decided that this was the best move I had. I would take my fill of Haruna’s splendid rice porridge, and I would announce that I was completely full, thus naturally evading the task of having to try Sera’s cooking.

“Alright, then I’ll flow mine down now!”

Ahh, Haruna’s rice porridge? I wonder what it would taste like... I’m sure it’ll be delicious. I wonder what she seasoned it with?

I heard a *schrrp!!* sound, and Haruna looked displeased. She got down from the chair, tossed the tray on my desk, and left the room. It seemed she just wouldn’t accept the fact that the porridge wouldn’t go down the bamboo.

“Yuu, could you feed me Haruna’s porridge?”

I should take this chance and eat while I can. Yuu nodded once, and brought over the tray with the pot on it to my pillow side. There

was one pot of very sticky-looking white porridge, and one bowl of concrete-colored concrete.

It was pretty frightening how sticky that white porridge looked, but no matter how I looked at it that was probably Haruna's dish.

"You probably can't tell which one is mine, can you? It's my masterpiece, after all."

Sera hummed with pride. When I picked the white porridge, Sera seemed incredibly shocked and dropped her leaf sword to the ground. Yes, it looked like I had made the right choice. Although, it's not like that was too difficult.

"..... Ayumu, this one over here is definitely more delicious than that one, you know?"

"That one over there is obviously the one Sera made, isn't it?"

I told her that, and Sera gave me a small groan and put a finger to her lips.

She seemed to be struggling with what to say next. On the one hand, she could say Haruna's porridge was her own and bask in the glory of my praise. On the other hand, she had her pride and didn't want to lie. When it came to cooking, her usual composed, commanding personality just disappeared somewhere.

Well then, let's eat quickly while Sera is preoccupied.

Yuu scooped out a spoonful of porridge and blew on it.

And then, Yuu opened her mouth a bit. I heard the cute Yuu in my head go "Here, onii-chan~~. Open up and say aaaaahhhh~~" and smile at me. Yes, this was it! This was how life should be!

"Aahhhhh." I opened my mouth wide and she fed me a spoonful.

This was...! I see! So this stickiness was cheese! And this taste, I see, this was cream sauce, wasn't it?! But this didn't count as rice porridge anymore. It also didn't count as a risotto... this was doria⁴⁸! Seafood doria!

This really wasn't something you should be feeding a sick person... squid and things like that were pretty hard to digest, weren't they?

I really didn't know how to put how good this was into words, but for now, I'll just say that it was delicious.

The goddess next to me took one more spoonful of porridge out. I watched her gauntlet and opened my mouth up wide again, knowing all too well how embarrassingly doting I looked. But then, at the same time, the door slammed open.

"Hey, gloomy necromancer, what are you doing?! I'll feed Ayumu, so give me that!"

Haruna karate-chopped Yuu's gauntlets, and the spoon fell into the doria. In her other hand she held a... a kettle? What did she want to do with that kettle? I could have sworn I saw the air in the room shivering... this gave me a really, really bad feeling...

Haruna snatched the tray forcefully from Yuu, and using the chair as a footstool, she held up the kettle.

Don't tell me... stop that... for the love of God...

"Go, Grayson! Messer Wing!"

Why are you quoting such an obscure character like Karl Lichter von Randall⁴⁹? I watched as the seafood doria slowly came towards me, and I felt a chill go up my spine. I wasn't in a sauna, and yet I couldn't stop the zombie sweat from breaking out across my brow.

Haruna began to tip the kettle forwards... give... me a damn break... I tried to run away as much as possible, but Sera held me down.

"Patients should lie there quietly."

Sera gave me an icy-cold look and smiled. She's looking forward to what's going to happen after this, isn't she? What a demon this vampire ninja was!

I could see steam coming from the spout of the kettle.... Huh? Don't

tell me... it was boiling water?! She was planning to send hot water going down that thing?! Save me! Yuu... ah, she's over there hiding out.

I see. If boiling water came crashing down onto me, there would probably be a splash zone, wouldn't there?

"Don't worry! Have faith in me!"

Don't be absurd... there was no way I could trust Haruna considering the position I was in right now.

"Someone, help me..."

Nobody heard the bitter cry my heart was giving out. And then, like a water slide, boiling water went running down the bamboo pole. The hot water turned into a muddy stream and rushed right onto my face.

H-H-HOOOOOOTTTT!!!

Part 2

As I was accustomed to doing, I woke up early in the morning and went to school. I probably couldn't sleep because I had been knocked out, or maybe because my head was still dizzy. Although, the cause of it all had still been Sera's cooking.

The first person to come in was a boy... or so I thought, but right there was...

"Aikawa... do you always come this early?"

"Tomonori."

It was a boyish vampire ninja. Wasn't her class next door?

"Don't call me Tomonori!"

"Then you stop saying that you're my wife. Can you do that?"

"My being your wife is already set in stone, so there's nothing I can do about that."

Tomonori stood there imposingly with her arms on her hips, looking resolute.

"So can I call you Yuki then?"

"Not adding an honorific even... well, fine, I guess that's alright."

"Okay then, Yuki. What are you doing here at a time like this? You're way too early even for morning practice."

"I thought I would try to keep the same schedule as you..."

"You went and investigated my schedule?"

"... I can't really see Aikawa except for here, so I thought... this was the only thing I could do so we could spend more time together..."

“You really don’t have to go to that much trouble just to meet with me...”

“I’m definitely going to be a good wife! I’ve already decided that!”

Tomonori was acting almost as selfish as the masou shoujo, and she sat in the desk in front of me. She let out a single sigh, and made her face brighten up again. She was sure quick at switching moods like that.

“So, how was the test? I did really bad on mine. They’ll definitely make me take extra lessons. Even though I still have to go to practice.”

“I got a perfect.”

“Seriously?! Aikawa, you’re a good student?!”

Tomonori’s eyes sparkled and mumbled her admiration. I felt pretty self-conscious and averted my gaze.

“Nah, I studied a hell of a lot.”

“I tried to study too. But I just ended up scribbling on my notebook and then all my time went out the window.”

We shared a laugh. I usually ended up scribbling my time away too.

“Hey, Yuki. Sera’s supposed to be your enemy, right? So why did you come and save us?”

“The conservative and reform factions... all they’re fighting over is who they think the successor to our race should be. In the past, we even killed each other over this... but to me... that doesn’t change the fact that we are still comrades.”

“That’s pretty like you to think like that. Ah, right, is that machine still not working?”

“No, it’s not! Everything’s going so slowly, seriously. You know, I made a suggestion. I said that we should just use a hose instead to spread the stuff.”

“That also sounds like it would cause quite a bit of trouble... so what happened to all that talk about the person trying to break the machine?”

“You mean the assassin? We’re trying to look for him too, but there’s just too little information. If we just had a name, we could find him pretty easily too.”

“Oh? That’s pretty impressive.”

“Right?!” Tomonori gave me a huge smile that almost made me think of flowers in full bloom.

“By the way, did you know there’s a new convenience store that opened up in front of the station?”

“Of course. Don’t underestimate me!”

“You sure are a convenience store maniac, aren’t you?”

So she even knows that about me too? Wondering whether she would judge me for liking convenience stores so much, I responded with my guard up. “Is there a problem with that?”

“Nah, the truth is I’m one too.”

Tomonori-san, you’re amazing! We firmly shook each other’s hands. I really wish we could just be friends rather than husband and wife.

Well, it wouldn’t be too bad if we just called ourselves husband and wife. That wasn’t the important thing. “Husband and wife” was just a title; we could still just go on as friends. Tomonori seemed to be acting like she wanted it that way as well.

Being “husband and wife” would be pretty annoying, so if she didn’t say that she wanted to come and freeload off me like a certain masou shoujo, then I wouldn’t mind just continuing on like this.

I mean, if I was just talking with Orito here, I would just ignore him and just sleep like a log.

However, having a fun chat like this with Tomonori didn’t annoy

me at all.

It might have had a lot to do with the fact that there wasn't a single person in the room except for us. At least, that's what I thought, but that wasn't it. Even when the usual guy and the student council president girl came in, we still continued to talk.

By the time Orito had gotten to school, the students around me had already started chatting.

"Well then, I guess I'll head back. I'll come back again when it's lunch break. See ya."

She waved one hand and left the room. As soon as she left the room, Orito appeared in front of me, and collapsed onto my desk.

"A-Aikawa! You bastard! You really are going out with Tomonori, aren't you?! Hey!!"

Good night, Orito-sama.

"Heeey!! Aikawa! Aikawaaaaaaa!!"

And I slept until lunch break.

With only one thought running through my head: I wonder what Tomonori and I would talk about next?

Part 3

When lunch break arrived, Tomonori came over as promised. I opened the bentou that Haruna had packed for me, and Orito also opened up his own lunch.

By the way, for me, today's menu was... fried eggs. Ahh, those ultimate fried eggs I had before? They sure were delicious, but the quantity was just...

Tomonori saw what was in my lunch and burst out laughing.

"Ahah! It's completely fried eggs?! That's terrible! Alright, here. This is Aikawa's bentou."

She passed over a bentou box.

"Oh? What about Tomonori's bentou?"

At Orito's question, Tomonori puffed out her chest and spoke proudly.

"I don't get hungry!"

Tomonori hummed in self-satisfaction, and Orito's eyes began to sparkle. He gave me a disgusting look, almost as if he saw through everything.

"Aikawa, tell her. Tell Tomonori that she doesn't need to go on a diet."

"A-are you an idiot?! You think I'm on a diet?!"

Tomonori began to whack Orito's spiky head over and over again.

"Ah, but it looks like you are."

I opened the bentou box Tomonori had given me and picked up a

piece of shrimp stir fried in chili sauce.

At that point, an indescribable sense of anxiety ran through me. I gulped.

“W-What’s wrong? Hm? That’s a shrimp, right?”

I glared at the chili shrimp and hesitated. Tomonori watched me, bewildered.

“Yeah. That’s not the problem.”

My apprehensions were coming from the fact that it was unclear whether “vampire ninjas made awful food,” or “Sera’s food was exceptionally awful.” If the former, the minute I ate this food I would end up at the nurse’s. Or maybe I’d even get hauled to the emergency room.

Should I get Orito to taste test it? ... Nah, let’s prevent any casualties here.

Seeing Tomonori giving me that worried look made me feel pretty miserable though, so I took one deep breath...

Here I go! Whatever happens, happens!

When I put the shrimp in my mouth, I felt a bit of spice, but overall it was pretty good. The fried chicken was also not bad. And unlike Haruna, she actually put some white rice in too.

In other words... it was normal! At that point, I came to the conclusion that Sera’s cooking was just exceptionally horrible.

Grrrr~::~

Hm?

“What was that sound just now?”

Orito and I both cocked our heads to the side at the same time.

“Ah, well,” Tomonori shrugged. But then...

Grrr~~~

It was a sound that was coming from Tomonori.

“Sounds like you’re hungry.”

“S-Shut up! I told you I’m not hungry!”

Her face turned red and she desperately fought back. However, her stomach kept growling.

“Here, eat up.”

I offered her a bite of Haruna’s ultimate fried eggs.

“I’m serious! My body just seriously doesn’t get very hungry!”

Tomonori continued to yell her objections, but when I forcibly presented the eggs to her, she gave up and took a bite. And then, she looked amazed at how good it was.

“What is this?! It’s great! Aikawa made this?!”

“This is something Haruna made.”

She might get jealous at that. I immediately thought that maybe I shouldn’t have said that, but Tomonori gave me the look of an innocent and pure child.

“This is amazing! How did she make it this delicious?!”

It seemed that Tomonori just wasn’t the type that was capable of jealousy.

Amazing things were amazing, and she could enjoy those things without any ulterior motives.

“Could I start calling her ‘master’?”

“I mean, you really don’t have to ask me for permission...”

“Could I have some more?”

“Yeah, as you can see, I have quite a lot here.”

“Hooray! W-Wait here just a second!”

Tomonori held out both her hands to me, signaling “stop!” and left the room with the speed expected from someone on the track team. She returned a few seconds later.

She held a strange-looking bag in her hands, and in that bag was... mayonnaise, all sorts of dressing, sesame oil, sunflower oil, chili oil, olive oil... why so much oil?

“What the hell is that?”

“Thanks for the meal!”

Tomonori was smiling ear to ear, and poured dressing all over the Aikawa household’s Ultimate Fried Eggs.

“Y-You! What the hell are you doing?!”

Orito was the one who had screamed. He still hadn’t gotten a taste of the fried eggs today yet. He stood up, his chair making a rattling sound. And then, he looked at the eggs with a sad, yearning expression.

“Tomonori, you’re not supposed to put dressing on fried eggs~~~.”

Orito spoke in an emotional tone. I felt this indescribable feeling deep inside, as if someone had just splashed lemon juice on my fried chicken without warning, but for now I decided to just smack Tomonori.

“Ow! Come on, isn’t sesame dressing nice? Remember, if there’s no oil, it’s no good!”

“No, that’s not it, we couldn’t care less about your salad obsession!”

Orito and Tomonori glared at each other.

Spotting a chance there, I snatched and began to eat Orito’s bentou...

Part 4

When I returned, I saw Haruna standing in the entrance way, holding a telephone receiver and groaning.

“What exactly are you doing?”

“A-Ayumu! Since when have you been there?!”

Haruna hid the telephone receiver behind her back. It looked like she was doing something that made her feel guilty.

“What are you planning to do with the telephone?”

“Why does it matter?! It’s got nothing to do with you!”

“I mean, it’s our telephone, so it kind of does... if you don’t tell me, I’m going to go wash your underwear.”

“Well, the truth is...” Haruna seemed to resign herself and her attitude took a 180 degree turn. She put the telephone back where it belonged. Her ahoge waved from side to side, and she seemed to be thinking about something.

“I thought I might apologize to Dai-sensei...”

I was shocked at that statement. To think that Haruna would actually take the initiative and apologize. Was she going to apologize for that argument they had? Haruna was? Wow. So Dai-sensei was that important of an existence to her...

“But you know, just apologizing is...”

“Well, why don’t you invite her to the arcade?”

At my idea, her ahoge bounced in response.

“Yeah! That’s it! Dai-sensei would definitely be happy if I did that!”

Seeing Haruna happy made me feel it was an honor to have been able to be of some use.

As if she was playing Attack Rock-Paper-Scissors⁵⁰, Haruna immediately snatched up the telephone receiver and quickly dialed out.

“Ah, is this Dai-sensei? It’s me. Haruna from the Refrain Year, Rising Class.”

I returned to my room, all the while wondering why girls changed the way they acted only when they were on the phone. When I got back to my room, I saw Sera there, cleaning.

“Oh, so you came back?”

“Yeah, I’m back. It sure is nice having Sera here now.”

“All I do is make the trash bin look a bit better every once in a while.”

Sera thought of this room as a trash bin.

I put my schoolbag down and changed out of my uniform. Sera didn’t seem to care even if I changed right next to her. If it was Haruna, she would definitely turn red though. I opened up one of my dresser drawers, and took out the pair of jeans on the top.

“By the way, Ayumu, when I do the laundry, make sure you take all the things out of your dirty clothes’ pockets.”

Sera showed me that bomb that was shaped like a pencil. Wow, I had completely forgotten that. It would have gotten crazy if that had blown up in the washing machine.

“Ahh, sorry about that.”

When I checked that nothing in particular was out of place, Sera next took out the glasses case and thrust it at me.

“And then, there are these glasses...”

Oogh. It looks like she discovered those pervy glasses. This wasn't good.

"Well, those are..."

If she found out they were pervy glasses, Sera would probably chop my head off. As I thought about what lies or excuses I could feed her, Sera spoke with a serious expression.

"If you were handed these already, why didn't you pass them over to me?"

Hm? Wait, could it be that those black-rimmed glasses were Sera's?

"The person who gave me those didn't tell me anything when she did."

Wait just a second. When that person had handed me those glasses, she had said something like "I'm sure you've already heard." So maybe both Sera and that girl thought that the other party had already explained the situation to me.

"As I thought, I should have been the one to go. But I really would rather not have to go to your school."

"So that person was also a conservative faction vampire ninja?"

"Yes, exactly. And she didn't explain anything to you?"

"Yeah, nothing at all. Why do you need pervy glasses like-"

"Ayumu, did you use these? Please allow me to despise you. No, I already despise you, so I apologize, but could you tell me what word I should use to express my scorn even more?"

Was that really something you should be asking the person you despise? In any case, don't change your eye color and look at me like that.

"So, what do you use those glasses for?"

Sera took out a piece of paper from the pocket of her denim pants.

“Those glasses give you the ability to see through things.”

“Yeah, I’ve already figured that out.”

“It’s necessary to read this secret message here.”

“Ah, I see. So why did you give those to me then?”

“I went to retrieve them once, but I couldn’t meet up with my old friend, so considering you two attend the same school, I instructed her to pass it along to you.”

Isn’t that something you should have told the third person? As I had guessed, both of them had assumed the other had explained the situation to me and failed to do so themselves.

“Well, this is probably about that machine they have.”

Sera put on the glasses.

“Yes, as I thought. And to stop that machine, we need to...”

The piece of paper fluttered in the air as it dropped from Sera’s shaking hands. Sera stood completely still, acting almost as if time had stopped.

“Are you alright? What was written on the paper?”

Sera silently took off the glasses. She put her index finger to her lips and fell into thought.

“Ayumu, what should I do?”

“As I said, what was written on the piece of paper?”

“It said... that I am to kill Hellscythe-dono.”

Huh? Sera came to protect Yuu, didn’t she? If she kills Yuu, then wouldn’t they not be able to revive the old vampire ninja leader anymore?

“Why in the world do you have to kill her?”

“According to this secret message, there are some who have this ridiculous plan to use that machine to turn humanity into vampire ninjas.”

“What in the world does that have to do with Yuu?”

“Well, it’s a plan to deal with the massive number of monsters appearing lately. The idea is that if we can change half of mankind into vampire ninjas, then not only this time, but if something like this ever happens again, we would be able to deal with it. So this huge number of monster appearances is the cause of it all. And then, when they tried to figure out who was the root cause of the monster appearances, they arrived at the conclusion that it was Hellscythe-dono.”

How in the world did they get to that? I had absolutely no idea what they could have been thinking.

“Didn’t they say there was an assassin who was trying to destroy that machine?”

“Yes, that’s what they said. When I heard about that, I had been pretty sure that this secret message would talk about that assassin. However... I was wrong.”

“So, do you even need to ask what to do? Killing Yuu would be pointless.”

“Please don’t just put it so easily like that.”

“Wasn’t your mission to protect Yuu? For you to kill her would just be...”

“That mission has been changed. Do you not understand what that means to me?”

“Yeah, I don’t get it.”

“... I’m a ninja, you know?”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“..... Fine. Whatever.”

I seemed to have angered Sera in some way, and she began to leave the room with an exasperated expression.

I put the pencil-shaped bomb into my pocket, and tightly gripped Sera's arm as she walked past me.

“Wait a second! What are you planning to do?”

“If we must stop the monsters from appearing, then there is no need to kill Hellscythe-dono.”

“What then? Are you going to go fight off all the Megalo by yourself?”

“Yes. That is exactly what I'm saying. I already know who is pulling the strings behind this all. I will find that person and I will kill that person.”

“There's no way you would be able to do that. For now, why not just report to your superiors and tell them about Kyouko and the others?”

“I did. I've already reported everything I've seen.”

“And they still want you to kill Yuu?”

“This is the latest message. In other words, there has been no change.”

“Even so, aren't they just ignoring you way too much?”

“It's an extreme measure... I see. That's it!”

“Hm?”

“They have gone to these extreme measures of trying to kill Hellscythe-dono because of that other ridiculous plan. In other words, if I can just destroy that machine, my orders might change once again.”

“And if your orders don’t change, what would you do? Would you really kill Yuu?”

“If it comes to that, then unfortunately...”

Then she would have no choice. Sera looked like she was about to say that, so I couldn’t hold it in anymore.

“Don’t screw around, dammit!!” I raised my voice, and Sera’s eyes widened.

“Why are you vampire ninjas so damn stubborn?! If you don’t want to do it, then just don’t do it!!”

“You do not understand the meaning of our missions to us.”

“Is Yuu’s life worth less than that?!”

“That’s not fair! To vampire ninjas like me-“

“I’m tired of hearing about that. So, are you really going to kill Yuu?”

“As I said, don’t ask me obvious questions like that!”

“Those aren’t the words I want to hear! Which is it?! Are you going to kill her? Or do you not want to kill her? I’m not asking a vampire ninja! I’m asking Sera herself!”

“There’s no way I would want to kill her, is there?!”

Her jade-colored eyes watered up. Her eyes, which usually emitted a strong, confident light, today seemed to waver a bit.

“... You’re a pretty honest person, aren’t you?”

“I don’t need your flattery. It’s disgusting.”

Sera *hmpfhed*, and after rubbing her eyes with her index finger, she spoke with the same controlled determination I was used to seeing from her.

“But thanks to you, my resolve has broken through. I will abandon

this mission.”

I let out a huge sigh.

“For now, we really have to do something about that machine.”

“Yeah.”

At that time, we heard the pitter-patter of feet from outside the room. I knew in an instant who those feet belonged to. It was Haruna.

“Ayumu! I’m going to the arcade for a bit, but do you want to come too?”

I looked at Sera, and Sera looked at me.

“Nah, I have plans. Dai-sensei is going with you?”

“Yeah! She said she just dealt with a huge load of Megalo! So then they gave her a holiday, but she said she was really bored.”

I could hear Haruna’s excitement in every word she uttered. It seemed that she was able to make up with Dai-sensei.

“You should just take this chance and have fun with Dai-sensei together.”

“Ehhh, Ayumu should come too. What about the leaf woman?”

“I also have some small things to take care of.”

“Why don’t you invite Yuu?”

“The gloomy necromancer? She said she didn’t want to go out.”

Was Yuu still worrying about the other day? Worried that Kyouko and the Megalo appearing was her fault...

“We’ll go together next time.”

“Alright! That’s a promise, alright?!”

I watched Haruna fly out of the room and turned my gaze to Sera. I didn't even have to ask her if she was ready; she knew exactly what I wanted to say, and just gave me a firm nod in response.

Part 5

The atmosphere around us almost made me think that we were doing a test of courage⁵¹. We had arrived at the place where the reform faction vampire ninjas were staying. The night sky was eerie, and somewhat thanks to the cold wind blowing and the close-to-crumbling outer wall of the building we were in front of, there was quite an ominous mood in the air.

We made nary a sound, and even made sure that our footsteps were inaudible.

We headed for the entrance, where we saw a girl wearing a black mantle, collapsed onto the ground.

“Ayumu.” Sera whispered my name.

“Yeah, I see it.” I gave back a short response.

Something had happened here.

I regretted not bringing my chainsaw with me. But if I walked through town with that thing, I would probably get immediately arrested, so I didn’t want to.

“Are you alright?”

I tried calling to the collapsed girl, but I got no response. Although, she didn’t seem dead either.

Certainly, if you touched someone around the neck, you should be able to tell if they were alive or not, right?

Relying on the knowledge I had gained from watching dramas, I softly touched her neck.

If she were conscious, then she would probably resist once she sensed that someone she didn’t know was about to touch her neck,

so I gathered that she was unconscious. I felt her pulse, and concluded that she was still alive. I smacked her on the cheek.

“Hey you. Are you alright?”

It would probably be better if I spoke a bit louder here, but our surroundings were so quiet that it was hard for me to get myself to do that.

The girl still didn’t respond, and I felt lost as to what to do, but in the end I decided to just leave her be.

If I called the police and an ambulance, the vampire ninja would probably not be too grateful for it. After all, I would think the same way.

“Let’s go in.”

I followed Sera into the building. We slowly and silently proceeded inwards, but right then I let out a small groan.

There were a number of vampire ninjas collapsed in front of us.

It wasn’t like they were all dead. They just all seemed to be unconscious.

“This is... this is the workings of the hypnosis gas that we vampire ninjas sometimes use. Ayumu, please try not to breathe in the air too much.”

I see. It would definitely be hard to fight all these vampire ninjas, especially if some of them were stronger than Sera. So it would be a better method to just use hypnosis gas. But I wonder why a vampire ninja would want to put all these other vampire ninjas to sleep.

I sped up, trying my utmost to be careful not to make a sound. We passed by those vampire ninjas sitting on the floor or lying down, and headed for that wide room where they were keeping that machine.

In front of that room, we found... Tomonori!

I almost shouted out from the shock, but I restrained myself. Because I could feel a wave of killing intent, a feeling I was getting quite used to, coming from behind me.

“I was wondering who had come, but it’s Seraphim. Why are you here?”

When I turned around, I saw... the girl who had passed me the black-rimmed glasses at school. It was Sera’s old friend, who was holding a transparent sword made of water.

“I came to destroy that machine that can control the weather.”

What was good about Sera was that she was always honest. What was bad about Sera was that she was always honest.

“Well, that’s not good.”

“Why?”

“Because that machine is necessary to ensure that our plan to turn mankind into vampire ninjas proceeds smoothly.”

“What did you just say right now?”

They both sent each other firm, piercing glares. They really were two of the same kind.

I see. This was the assassin! That girl was the assassin who was coming to destroy the machine. The conservative faction as trying to take this machine that the reform faction was trying to use and... so the plan to change mankind into vampire ninjas was the plan of the conservative faction?

“Wasn’t that person a conservative faction vampire ninja like you?”

“Yes. To think that that ridiculous plan came out of the same faction I belong to...”

Sera ground her inner teeth together, and leaves danced around her. Her jade-colored eyes turned crimson, and her mantled fluttered around her.

“Hey hey, do you plan to fight with me? We’re from the same faction, aren’t we?”

“Welcome talk is exchanged over drinks, unwelcome talk... is exchanged over swords!”

Sera took out a sword. Her green sword clashed with the blue sword of the other girl.

What should I do here? Should I back her up?

“Hiken, Tsubamegaeshi!”

Sword met sword and clangs rang through the air. A second time, and then a third time. But there was no sound the fourth time.

Fresh blood flew from Sera’s chest. She had been cut down with a single sword stroke.

... That easily?

I see. If this was an opponent who was strong enough to overwhelm Sera, then I could understand how the situation here could have gotten like this.

I hid in the shadow of a pillar, and couldn’t even poke my head out.

“Seraphim, you certainly got stronger. I didn’t expect you to be able to withstand three of my attacks.”

“... Do you not have any doubts about all this?”

“When did you become the type of idiot who would doubt your mission?”

Should I go and try to do something about that machine? Or should I try to help Sera and beat that girl?

“Protecting humans by changing them into vampire ninjas... why can’t you see how much of a contradiction that is?”

“It does not matter what I think. I was given that mission, so I will

carry out that mission.”

There really wasn't much time to think here. I had to take some action, and quickly.

I stuck my hands in my pocket, and discovered a single pencil.

My pencil-shaped bomb. How do I use it... ah, gotcha.

“Even so, you're wrong.”

“Sera!”

I flew out from behind the pillar, and the other girl threw a blue sword at me. It was thrown at a speed I couldn't even follow, and the sword pierced through my neck.

What the hell was this? This sword looked like water...

“Hm? He's still not dead? What kind of trickery is this?”

The girl's eyes thinned. I pulled the sword out and massaged my neck.

“Trying to make it rain tonkotsu soup, trying to change mankind into vampire ninjas, trying to kill Yuu... why are vampire ninjas so damn jumbled up?”

“If you've thought it out that much, then you should already know. Right now, we vampire ninjas do not have a definite leader, a person who can make decisions for all of us.”

The girl answered like that and flicked her hand at me. Instinctively, I dodged to the side, and I saw a hole appear in the wall, almost as if it had been shot by a gun. Taking a closer look, I saw that the girl's hand was wet. Did she just fling water droplets at me?

“I see, so that's why you want to use Yuu to revive your leader.”

“Ayumu! Run! This is not an opponent you can-“

Like a pitcher, I reared back and hurled the pencil.

“Did you really think that would hit me?”

The girl just leaned her head to the side, and the pencil slipped by her.

“Nah, I hit exactly what I wanted.”

The corners of my mouth turned upwards. I hadn’t been aiming for her. I was aiming for something deeper inside.

The girl turned around. And then, an explosion reverberated through the room.

A hole had opened... on the wall.

That completely failed! I thought I was completely on the mark too!!

I had thrown it right at the machine, but before it could reach the machine it had been repelled.

To think she could make it in time... dammit! I felt ashamed for having tried to look cool back there.

“Sorry about that. I won’t let you destroy that machine. I’ll be taking it with me.”

The girl held a ball of water in her hands. It was a ball around the size of a volleyball.

And then, after she threw the ball into the air, the water scattered in all directions.

“Taste my blade... Hiken, Hyakki Zensatsu.”⁵²

The water that had spread through the room, as if shot out by a sprinkler, all came and attacked me. It was a torrential downpour of blades. I took a step back and started to run, but I realized that I had hit a wall.

Was this skill like that one that Sera had?

There was no way I could dodge the rain... crap. I was going to be torn to pieces.

Well, even if I was going to be torn to pieces, I would avenge Tomonori. I really should have brought my chainsaw with me today.

The blades of water bit into my shoulders and my rear.

But even then, I continued to move forwards... and right at that moment...

"Final chant confirmed. The target area's gravity will be changed to 10G."

I heard a man's voice, low yet clear, and suddenly the water droplets, along with my own body, fell and crashed into the floor.

It was a boy... no, a girl, standing in front of me with our school's designated skirt waving back and forth and with eyes that seemed out of focus.

Tomonori?

"Oh? There was someone who wasn't asleep? How bothersome."

So it was like that. The vampire ninjas who were collapsed weren't beaten, they were just asleep.

Tomonori held out her right hand. And then, a suspicious man appeared in front of her.

The right half of his body was human-looking. A two-meter tall, burly man. However, the left half of his body flickered and waved like flames. The words that I had heard earlier had come from this man, hadn't they?

That man left behind a white afterimage, almost like a jet trail, and went to strike the girl.

The girl waved her blue sword. However, the sword passed right through the man, and the girl was sent flying after getting punched by a tightly-gripped right fist.

The man made out of flames flickered and disappeared.

“These are the crossroads of life.” **”First chant confirmed. Technique activated.”**

A chant flowed out of Tomonori’s mouth, quietly and clearly. In response, a transparent heat wave began to form into the shape of a person.

The girl with the blue sword quickly ran over.

“I proceed on the road of life, whilst you proceed on the road of death.” **”Second chant confirmed. Attack wave being prepared.”**

Tomonori was sliced from the tip of her shoulder to her side, but she didn’t seem the least bit perturbed. The half-man passed through Tomonori’s body and wedged his fist into the girl’s stomach.

“Be bitten to pieces. Masticore.” **”Final chant confirmed. Attack wave will be launched forwards.”**

I heard the sound of flapping wings, and the outer walls were all blown away at once. Sera was able to manage by hiding behind the machine, but the girl collapsed, and stayed down.

What? What was that just now?

Moonlight streamed in from the exploded portion of the wall. In one second, the room had gone from four walls to three. To think you could just destroy a wall so easily like that...

“Aikawa, Ayumu.” Tomonori stared at me with cold eyes.

“Tomonori? What’s wrong with you?”

Tomonori did not respond to my words, but just stood there paralyzed. She then spun her body around, and gazed at that

machine that was supposed to make it rain tonkotsu soup.

Tomonori held her left hand out in front of her chest, and I saw yet another ghost riding on top of her arm. Sera suddenly flew to the side and got away from the machine.

It was about the size of a baseball, and looked like a balled-up tissue on fire. It whizzed through the air in a spiral pattern and headed for the machine.

And then, the machine exploded. Or no, that's not right. The machine didn't explode. That little fireball exploded. White flames spread and burned the machine.

"Target has been destroyed. Now eliminating remaining enemies."

The man who stood behind Tomonori spoke with a harsh tone. It was a plain, steady tone without any hint of emotion.

Tomonori turned and held out her arm at me next. The ghost-like man with only half a body that stood behind Tomonori watched me. I instantly knew what was going to happen, and I flew to the side, trying to escape.

The man came up to me without making a sound. I tried to punch him in the face, but I just hit thin air. Even if I touched him, I couldn't feel any warmth. He was like smoke.

His half-transparent right arm, which had enough muscle that it could have come from a bodybuilder, made contact with my cheek.

It didn't really hurt, but it was enough that I cried out a bit in response. However, it wasn't going to kill me.

I wanted to counter, but I couldn't do anything.

What exactly was I supposed to do here?

"Tomonori... you..."

What? Wait...

“Why are you crying?”

“A... Ai... kawa... Hel...” **”Abnormality detected in host body. Removing all restrictions on weapons.”**

Balls of fire flew all around Tomonori. Three... four... maybe five of them? From how powerful that other explosion was, I knew this was enough to destroy this entire room.

“Hiken, Tsubamegaeshi.”

Clang! I heard the sound of metal on metal, and a green sword cut through one of the balls of fire that had just appeared. The fireball split into two and began burning up, after which it vanished. So you could actually attack those balls?

“Ayumu, why aren’t you helping?!”

Sera swung her sword while her left hand put pressure on her chest wound. Tomonori didn’t move a muscle, and the balls of fire flew at Sera. Sera dodged with dance-like steps, but it was impossible to dodge all of those balls of fire, especially considering the weird path they took when they flew.

I heard an explosion. Sera’s legs were dyed in red.

There was no way out. I had to just do it! I closed the distance between me and Tomonori, and sent my fist pummeling into the man behind her. 200%! The man didn’t even try to dodge, and my fist made contact. This time, I definitely felt something. I felt like I had punched right into an iron plate.

At that moment, signs of life returned to Tomonori’s eyes.

“Aikawa... what happened to me?! What is this... what happened to me?! Don’t come in! Don’t come inside me!”

Was she conscious again? Tomonori didn’t seem to understand what exactly was happening to her. The man standing behind Tomonori was connected through Tomonori from behind.

One of the balls of fire came straight at my chest... did I get too

close?

Boom. The ball of flame exploded loudly, and I was sent flying. It was enough of an impact to break my body right into two.

And then, when I separated from Tomonori, the light once again vanished from her eyes.

“Liberate your frozen heart.” **”First chant confirmed. Technique activated.”**

What? Was she planning on doing the same thing she did before?

“Change even the breaths of Gods into blizzards.” **”Second chant confirmed. Preparations for cooling complete.”**

“Sera, let’s get out of here!”

I reattached my bottom half and desperately tried to get up. At the same time I called out to Sera...

“Rush through, Absolute Fenrir.” **”Final chant confirmed. Commence freezing.”**

In just a second, the room froze over.

This was the same phenomenon I had seen back during that time at the arcade.

And then, I remembered Kyouko’s words when she witnessed the same phenomenon.

“Ahah... so you did have it. Ariel-sensei’s masou weapon!”

And then, I remembered what Dai-sensei had said.

“Where is it~? I don’t see it anywhere~. My my, Ayumu-san~~.”

She had said that the thing she had given me *wasn’t there*, in the sense that *a person wasn’t there*.⁵³

Could it be that the vampire ninja Tomonori herself was the item that Dai-sensei had entrusted to me?

And that wasn't all. That girl vampire ninja had that ridiculous plan to use that machine to turn mankind into vampire ninjas. In other words, she didn't intend on destroying the machine.

"Target has been destroyed. Now eliminating remaining enemies."

Could it be... that the assassin who was aiming to destroy the machine... was Tomonori?

No, to be precise, it was the weapon that was inside of Tomonori. Or rather, maybe that half-man half-flame entity was the masou weapon?

My legs were frozen. The walls and the hallway were already covered in ice. It also seemed that Sera hadn't been able to escape. However, only Tomonori... only Tomonori had not been touched by the ice.

It was like this that time as well. *The ground around the collapsed form of Tomonori was already frozen.*

The ground *around* her.

I couldn't even move the lower half of my body anymore, but Tomonori seemed completely fine.

Tomonori turned to face me and took a single step towards me.

I heard the sound of ice breaking, and Tomonori slowly approached.

"Hold a blue flame on the right." **"First chant confirmed. Technique activated.**

Again? She was doing this again? I got out of my frozen shoes and stood on top of the ice.

"Carry a red flame on the left." **"Second chant confirmed. Preparations for flame dispersion complete."**

I closed the distance between Tomonori and me one more time. The fireball from before headed for me, but Sera threw what looked like

a red, autumn leaf at Tomonori's arm, and her arm went off track. The fireball crashed into the wall and exploded.

How should I stop her? What should I do?

I have no idea. Did I have to kill her?

... as if I could do that!!

She was my friend!

I pulled Tomonori's body towards my own in an embrace. I didn't even think to strike her.



“Stop it! Stop it, Tomonori!”

At that moment, certainly... signs of life returned to Tomonori's eyes.

“D-Don’t call me Tomonori!”

Tomonori yelled out, and as if a string had been cut, she immediately lost consciousness.

And as if blown away by Tomonori’s fierce yell, the flame-like half man and the exploding balls of fire vanished into thin air.

Part 6

Whatever that other Tomonori had been, the ice soon melted and disappeared, and I was left sitting in a room that smelled of tonkotsu soup. The contents of the machine seemed to have all flowed out of the opening in the wall.

Tomonori was sleeping soundly next to me, and both Sera and that other girl were leaning against the wall in a corner of the room.

Sera had drunk dry the blood pack that the other girl had been carrying, but she seemed pretty injured.

Sera had an arm on her bewitching chest, and carried herself over to my location. I stood up, and called out to her. “You alright?”

Sera shook her head.

“I really need to find some fresh blood.”

“You can have some of mine if you want.”

“I’ll pass.”

As I thought. Also, stop looking at me with those red eyes.

“Hey, Sera. Tomonori back there... I mean, Mael Strom...”

“I don’t know what that was. That girl never had that sort of power.”

“Is she really a vampire ninja?”

“Yeah. She’s quite an excellent vampire ninja, who’s been taking on missions for a long time.”

If she was a masou shoujo, then she was able to manipulate memories. So what if Tomonori’s existence itself was a fabricated memory?

I sighed and frowned, looking at Sera. She didn't seem like she was in her usual scornful mood.

"That looks like it hurts. Are you really alright?"

"Yeah, I think I can make it back home. But I really need to suck Haruna's blood as soon as possible."

She took a long, painful-looking breath. Only Sera could look so beautiful when she sighed in pain like that.

"But being a vampire ninja sure is hard."

"I'm quite proud of the fact that I became a vampire ninja."

"Became? You weren't a vampire ninja when you were born?"

"Vampire ninjas are immortal creatures. If you're immortal from the day you were born, then you would just stay a baby, wouldn't you?"

"I guess that's true."

"Vampire ninjas are beings who were granted immortality through being given Hellsythe-dono's blood."

"So Yuu was the one who made the vampire ninjas. And to make mankind into vampire ninjas, all you have to do is hand out your blood?"

"Yeah. They probably intended to mix our blood in with the population's drinking water."

"That works even if the water dilutes it?"

"I don't think they intended to make very strong vampire ninjas."

"Raining blood... the thought of that is pretty frightening too."

"It's difficult for vampire ninjas to make blood themselves. We also expend blood when we use our powers. So, we need periodic blood transfusions. Vampires who aren't ninjas end up attacking people."

“So, why do you refuse to drink my blood?”

“When we drink the blood of others, we apply a drug we have in our teeth to prevent harm onto the one whose blood we are sucking.”

“So that’s why you always kiss the person you’re sucking blood from?”

“I’d rather die than kiss you.”

“I feel so loved. So, do you want to lean on my shoulder?”

“I don’t really want to use too much soap later, so please don’t touch me.”

It seemed that there really was nothing to worry about here.

At that time, my phone rang, and the sound echoed through the room.

“Sera, wait just a second.”

I headed for the one wall that had been cleanly ripped away, and flipped open my phone while looking down on the town lights below me. It was an unknown number.

“Hello.”

“Ayumu! You really should come!”

It was Haruna’s voice.

“Haruna? Where are you calling me from?”

“I borrowed a phone at the arade.”

“I see. You’re not... causing... anyone... trouble..... ri... ght....”

My voice slowly came to a stop. I looked up at the sky, so shocked that I almost dropped the phone.

“It’s really fun here! Come on, you come too!”

“Ahh, I want... to go, but...”

The sounds of flapping wings assault my ears.

In front of me was a monster with red skin, the face of a lizard, and the wings of a bat.

I only had one word in my vocabulary to describe such a beast.

A dragon.

Sending in such a famous monster when we were in a situation like this was just a bit...

The dragon, wearing a boy's school uniform, headed towards us. The dragon was huge, around four or five meters tall, and seemed to have a bit of a hard time coming in through the missing wall.

The dragon pointed one of its three fingers towards Tomonori. So he was aiming for Tomonori?

I see. So Kyouko figured it out too? Figured out that at that time, Tomonori was the only one who wasn't harmed. That the person who had the weapon wasn't me, but it was Tomonori. Well, the truth was that Tomonori herself was the weapon, but Kyouko probably at least figured out that Tomonori was somehow connected with the weapon.

So this dragon was one of Kyouko's fake Megalo? But... it was strange.

Why wasn't Kyouko herself here? She was the one who wanted the weapon, right?

“Ayumu! Are you listening?! Don't ignore me!”

“Sorry, Haruna. It looks like I'm going to be a bit longer...”

“U-Uwaah!!” I heard Haruna raise her voice on the other end of the line.

“What's wrong? What did you do this time?”

“Ayumu! That thing... help-“ “Haruna, run away!”

“Hey, Haruna! Dammit!”

Something might have happened to Haruna, since I heard no response. The dragon bent down and approached Tomonori, so I kicked that lizard face.

With 300% power.

The dragon turned and glared at me, but I ignored him and continued to yell over the phone.

“Haruna! Hey, Haruna!”

I could vaguely hear voices coming from the other end. It was so faint that I would have missed it if I hadn't been paying attention, but I could definitely hear it.

-

I heard Dai-sensei's voice, calling out Kyouko's name.

-

Why was she going after Dai-sensei? Kyouko wanted the weapon that Dai-sensei had made, right? I see! Dai-sensei could make masou weapons. So Kyouko was going after Dai-sensei so she could make Dai-sensei create weapons for her! But considering how strong Dai-sensei was, how did she plan to make that plan work...?

It must be that man! If he had an absurd amount of power just like Yuu did, then even Dai-sensei might... suddenly, I had a bad feeling about all this.

But in any case, hearing Haruna calling for help was a rare thing indeed. I should hurry up and deal with this fellow over here, and then get right over to where Haruna was.

“Sera! Take care of Tomonori! Run!”

At the time when I said that, Sera was already beside the dragon,

preparing to launch an attack.

Ah, now I remember. Vampire ninjas were never afraid of a fight.

The dragon sent Sera flying with a flick of its long tail. What a swing that was. It was enough to even put Ogasawara⁵⁴ to shame.

Sera slammed into the wall, and groaned in pain.

I stopped thinking about the consequences and prepared an attack as strong as I could muster. A 600% attack.

The dragon's huge mouth opened, and I could see his sharp fangs. And then, a purple flame burst out from its gaping maw.

I formed a cross with my arms and blocked the attack.

Ugh, dammit! I had to deal with this thing fast and get to Haruna! God, it was hot.

Zombies were weak against light and fire. Being bathed in flames like this, I already knew all too well that my ability to regenerate my body had been considerably weakened.

If I attacked with 600% power, then the recoil might send my arms and legs flying from my body. And if that happened, it would take time before I could reattach them.

Dammit! If I didn't fight with only around 300% strength, then I wouldn't be able to go help Haruna.

"My turn! Hiken, Tsubamegaeshi."

Carrying a green sword in both hands, Sera attacked from behind. Completely as expected, she wasn't afraid in the least even after seeing that fire from before. In her position, I would have withered away.

Sera cut into the lizard's skin, but the dragon didn't seem to care.

Sera tried to put some distance between her and the dragon, but the dragon sent a three-fingered fist hurtling in Sera's direction. He did

that at a speed that was unimaginable for something that size. Alright, now he's turned his back on me. I closed the distance between us, and sent a strong punch into his back.

Even a dragon would yell out after being punched at 300% strength, right?

The dragon swung its tail, and I was sent flying to the side. And then, I slammed into the wall.

What a strong attack... did Sera also eat one of those attacks? Not good. Not good in many ways.

“Uwa! Kuaaahhhh!!!”

The dragon was squeezing Sera's body as if it was twisting a wet towel.

How much time has passed already? I really needed to get to Haruna as quickly as possible.

... But this guy was really strong. What should I do? With just us two here, it would take time to beat this thing. With just us two...

“Aikawa!”

I heard my name being called, and I realized that the dragon's tail was swinging right at me. I quickly ducked, and the tail gouged out a section of the wall behind me. And then, a fireball attacked that tail.

“Tomonori... you...”

Tomonori was standing up, and she had a fireball in her left hand.

However, she seemed to still be conscious, and looked at the dragon with youthful eyes brimming with confidence. Those fireballs didn't seem to be just an ability of the weapon inside her.

“Aikawa, Seraphim! Here I goooooooooo~~!!”

She sounded like she was having fun, and as if she was competing

in a hammer throw, she held the fireball by the tail and spun it around. Ah, so that's how the fireballs were used normally. She then threw it at the dragon like she was casting a fishing rod, and although it didn't explode, the dragon staggered from the impact and let Sera go.

Before her ponytail hit the ground, Sera waved her sword and cut the dragon's throat.

The dragon faced Sera while she was down on the ground and opened his mouth wide.

Seeing that, I stomped down onto the dragon's tail with 600% power.

If I just used 600% to stomp down, it's not like my body would fall apart.

The dragon turned its face towards me. And in that ugly mouth of his, the dragon had sucked up the fireball that Tomonori had thrown at him. And then... *boom!*

Those fireball bombs were no joke.

The dragon turned into sparkling white particles and vanished. But I didn't have time to stay there and watch that happen. I didn't know how much time I had lost here.

"Sera, I'm going to help Haruna."

"Yeah, while I'd also like to go..."

It seemed like she couldn't stand.

"The thought is enough. Tomonori, I'll leave Sera to you."

"R-Roger."

I stood in front of the hole that used to be a wall, and a cool wind blew through my heated body.

"Ah, right, Tomonori. Tomorrow I want to eat hamburger."

Tomonori gave me a quick thumbs up, so I returned one of my own.

And then, I threw my body out into that black night sky.

Part 7

The arcade had been reduced to a sorry-looking state. It was almost as if it had been hit by a small-area earthquake. The streetlamps buzzed and flickered.

There was nobody there. Not Haruna, not any normal humans, no one.

“A... yumu? Ayumu!”

When I turned around, I saw Haruna running at me wearing black and dirtied clothes, and I caught her in my arms. Thank God. It looked like I made it in time.

“What happened here?”

“Suddenly Megalo just started coming and coming and coming... and that girl was there too.”

“Kyouko?”

“Yes, probably. More importantly, that guy is amazing. To think that strange guy could hold up against Dai-sensei...”

“Where’s Dai-sensei?”

“Over there!” Haruna pulled me by the hand across two traffic lanes and led me onwards.

At that point, I could hear the sound of steel on steel.

I saw Dai-sensei, with her twin tails and wearing her laced white coat, fighting against Kyouko and a man. Under Dai-sensei’s white coat was a cute, cosplay-like masou shoujo outfit.

As expected from Dai-sensei. She was taking on two opponents but didn’t seem outmatched at all. In other words, if I could hold Kyouko back, then she should be able to win.

I quickly left Haruna there and joined in on the battle. Kyouko came at me from behind and I sent a punch at her, but she jumped out of the way. I met up with Dai-sensei, and I put my back to her back.

“Ahhhhh, Ayumu-san. Good afternoon~~~.”

She sounded as carefree as usual. But although she seemed pretty relaxed, she definitely looked hurt.

“It’s night right now. Should I take care of Kyouko?”

“Yes. Please~~.”

At the same exact moment, Dai-sensei and I both rushed at our respective enemies.

“Aikawa-san sure is annoying.”

Kyouko said that with a smile. She dodged a right straight jab, and cut off my arm with her tornado sword.

“You’re the last person I want to hear that from.”

I sent a kick at Kyouko, but she swung her body to the side, and from that position, sent a tornado attack back at me.

“Why are you going after Dai-sensei? Don’t you know how strong she is?”

“I was against it. However, that person said that he would rather have someone who could make new weapons than just having a weapon, so I’m... trying my best.”

A wind began to whirl up at my feet. I instantly dodged, but my arm was swept up high into the air.

I see. Dai-sensei had created that masou weapon. In other words, she could create more. But their miscalculation lay in how absurdly strong Dai-sensei was.

I had spent too much time thinking, and I found myself getting

knocked into the air by Kyouko's tornado. What a bad habit of mine.

And Dai-sensei was the one who pulled me back up.

... I had come to save her, and I was just being a hindrance. How uncool of me.

"Sorry about that, Dai-sensei."

"No no. I'm really, honestly happy you caaame~~."

With a building at our backs, we waited for Kyouko and the man.

"... About that masou weapon... how is he connected with Dai-sensei?"

"Ah, so you managed to meet him~? That's good. Ah, don't tell me, he was running wild~~?"

"Yeah. But I managed to restrain him, somehow."

When I said that, I heard Dai-sensei muttering something. "Ahh, I see," she whispered.

"As I expected, it was right to trust Ayumu-san with this. If anybody else found out that that girl was a weapon, then they would use her to defeat the Megalo. If that weapon runs wild again, Ayumu-san will be there to stop him for me, yes yes~?"

"I managed to stop him completely by blind luck last time, so please give me a break here."

"It's fine, it's fine. This happened with Haruna too, but you really are an amazing magician~~."

"I didn't use magic or anything like that. Exactly how do you think I stopped him?"

Dai-sensei laughed for longer than usual, and responded with a hint of teasing in her voice.

“Of course... with the magic of love.”

The magic of love, huh...? Dai-sensei seemed to want to find another place to fight, and ran in the opposite direction from our enemies.

“How does Dai-sensei know Tomonori? She’s not a masou shoujo, but a vampire ninja. There’s no point of relation between you two... hm? Don’t tell me that she’s somehow related to Virie?”

I called out to Dai-sensei as I chased after her. Kyouko and the man kept at a fixed distance and seemed to just be checking the situation out.

“No, not at all. That girl is a true inhabitant of this world. If you want to know our relationship with each other... she’s the daughter of an important friend of mine. For various reasons, she was chosen as the hiding place for a weapon that we could no longer keep in Virie~~.”

“So you just tampered with someone’s body without their permission?”

I looked at Dai-sensei with slightly scornful eyes.

“Yes, precisely. After all, if we didn’t do that, that girl would have died.”

“What do you mean?”

Did something happen in Tomonori’s past? And how was Dai-sensei involved with that? There were a mountain of things I wanted to ask, but...

“L-Let. Me. Go!!”

Haruna seemed to have gotten caught, so I didn’t have time to ask anymore. Well, I could always ask later.

“Haruna’s such an idiot. She knew she was no match for us but she still came over. It’s really strange when you think about it. Ah, could it be that she knew Aikawa-san was here, so she wanted to

show off?”

Kyouko raised her voice and laughed. Haruna grit and ground her teeth.

“Ahaha, it looks like I hit the bullseye.”

“Let Haruna go.”

I gave Kyouko a threatening glare, but she just looked bored.

The man wrapped his arms around Haruna’s neck as Haruna struggled to escape.

I shot up to him at top speed. I was going to punch him right in the face.

“Two hundred.” The man spoke. And then, I felt the unpleasant feeling of my brains being rattled and scowled.

What power this man had. He was a complete monster.

The tornado sword destroyed my legs. With a jerk, I crumpled to the asphalt. If I just hadn’t taken all that heat damage from the dragon back there, I would have been able to recover from this pretty quickly.

“Have you heard that people are unable to use a hundred percent of their own strength?”

Yes, I had heard that before. Or no, that wasn’t right.

I had said that myself before.

“If they used a hundred percent, their bodies wouldn’t be able to handle it.”

I completed his thought before he could say it out loud.

“But zombies have bodies that can handle it.”

Yes. He was a zombie, just like me. And just like me, he could exhibit strength beyond human limitations.

“That’s an easy way to put it, isn’t it? The word ‘zombie,’ that is. They have called me the King of the Night, but I will admit that ‘zombie’ also has quite a sweet ring to it.”

As the man said that, he tightened his arms.

Haruna seemed in pain and gasped for air. Even if he only used thirty percent of his strength to constrict her, Haruna would die, wouldn’t she?

Dammit!

“Umm, so what exactly is it that you want~~?”

Dai-sensei let go of her masou renki. She also dispelled her transformation, and she was left wearing a pleated skirt and a blouse. When her usual necktie appeared back again, she thrust her hands into the pockets of her white coat.

“There’s something I want you to make for me.”

The man slackened his arms, and Haruna gasped for oxygen.

“No good, Dai-sensei. Don’t talk with him.”

Dai-sensei ignored me, and slowly walked towards Kyouko.

“For now, can you ensure Ayumu-san and Haruna’s safety~~?”

“If that’s what you wish.”

The man released Haruna. Haruna tried immediately to punch the man, but her arm was caught by Kyouko.

“Well, alright then~~.” Dai-sensei gave out a resigned sigh.

“Dai-sensei! Why are you doing that?! Why are you-“

Haruna tried to grab onto Dai-sensei’s white coat, but she was flung away.

“Because Haruna is an important friend of mine~~.”

Dai-sensei spoke slowly and leisurely, her cheeks blushing red.

Move! Do you really think I would let them escape out from under my nose?! I'm going to punch them all and stop Dai-sensei!

That was all I could think about at that moment. But my body would not move the way I wanted it to.

A dark mist rolled in... and once again, I let Kyouko escape.

Haruna held Dai-sensei's katanas and cried. I also wanted to cry. Why was it that it all had to come to this in the end?

I thought Haruna would just keep on crying and get depressed, but she stood straight up and wiped off her tears.

"Ayumu! Let's go save Dai-sensei!"

"Well, it's not like we can go now."

"Not now! We'll go back, think of a good strategy, and beat those people black and blue!"

Haruna's eyes were tinged with regret, but they also shone with bright and confident hope.

Haruna sure was strong.

END CHAPTER 4

Epilogue – You Were a Zombie?



If you just brush away the sparks that fall on you, then everything would go well.

And you could ignore everything else.

You could just run to a place where sparks couldn't land on you.

Even now, I believed that was the best policy. But...

I hadn't realized it at all.

To think that there was someone who was getting sad just watching me brush off all those sparks...

In the end, you couldn't just brush off the sparks, but you had to put out the fire.

No matter how annoying it was, if you didn't get rid of the source of the fire, you could even lose things that are precious to you.

I really wish I had realized that by the fourth chapter.

Part 1

I stood in the shadows in one corner of our school grounds, staring at girls. They were playing volleyball, looking quite healthy and seemed to be having lots of fun.

Well, to be more accurate, I was watching Tomonori as she played with a big smile on her face.

“Aikawa, just look at those breasts. This is the best, isn’t it? I just want to jump right in there with them.”

“Those things are probably best left unsaid.”

“Hm? I mean, I’m a mammal after all.”

Well... it’s not like I couldn’t understand where he was coming from.

Orito was standing next to me, giving me a pointless running report on which girls looked best in which ways. I always collapsed when I was exposed to too much sunlight, so during gym class I usually just watched from the shadows.

Orito was called for a match and left me, so I was left alone. I lay down on the floor.

Dai-sensei was taken away, and I couldn’t do anything about it. If Kyouko got her hands on a masou weapon like this, what would I do?

As always, it took my all just to barely survive the situation.

Was that really enough? Was it really alright for me just to be able to brush away the sparks that had fallen on us?

“Aiiikawaaaa~~, what are you doing?”

Suddenly feeling someone staring at me, I twisted my body up.

“Tomonori... what happened with the volleyball match?”

“We won, of course. I’m not the type to go easy just because I’m going against humans.”

“..... Using the strength of vampire ninjas is just unfair.”

“... The strength of vampire ninjas... hey, am I... am I really a vampire ninja?”

Tomonori sat next to me, with her knees in front of her, and rested her head on her knees. Seeing her chest being squeezed by her thighs like that just reaffirmed to me the fact that zombies were definitely mammals.

“I’ve always thought that I was a vampire ninja that could summon fireballs. But there really aren’t ninjas like that, are there?”

“Yeah. I haven’t heard of a ninja like that.”

“Hmm, I’ve been thinking. I have this really unusual liking for oil. And I don’t get hungry. Could it be... I’m a robot or something?”

“That’s probably just that masou weapon person. I don’t think he’s a robot... maybe something more like a modified human? Like, a sorcerer or a summoner or something like that.”

“Ugh, so I’m really not a vampire ninja...”

Tomonori let out a lonely-sounding sigh, and I scratched the back of my head.

“Well, if you believe it, isn’t it fine?”

“Huh?”

“I think of myself as a zombie. To be honest, I have no idea what something like me would be called, but I think of myself as a zombie. So no matter what other people say, I’m a zombie.”

“What’s that supposed to mean? I have no idea. Ahahaha!”

Tomonori opened her mouth wide and laughed.

“But that’s all a high school student like me could say.”

“... Well, I guess I’ll do that. If my husband tells me something like that, then I really have no choice but to follow his advice.”

“Just quit it with the husband business. Can’t we just be friends?”

“By the way...”

“Hmm?”

“You were a zombie?”

She didn’t know...?

Tomonori flashed her teeth and gave me a broad smile, and I couldn’t help but give her a smile in return.

Part 2

After school, I found myself staring at the setting sun, and then I saw Yuu coming towards the school.

Did Yuu come to meet me today? Was coming to school to meet me a new secret fad or something?

“Yuu, what’s wrong? Are you by yourself?”

Yuu gave me a single nod and passed over a memo.

I’m sorry.

“Sorry for what?”

I caused so much trouble for everyone.

She was still worried about that? This was definitely not one of her good habits.

“You didn’t do anything like that. It was just the same thing that always happens. At the very least, it wasn’t Yuu’s fault.”

“Aikawa, let’s go back together!”

At that moment, Tomonori showed up, having come back from club meeting. Yuu hid behind my back and tried to get away from Tomonori.

“Oh? Is that Eucliwood? Wow, this is the first time I’ve met her. She’s really, really cute, isn’t she?”

“Look, she’s afraid of you. Don’t get any closer. Also, you’ve met her before.”

“What? Why are you treating me like I’m some sort of wild animal?”

“Ayumu! Let’s go to the arcade!!”

Haruna. You’re also here? It looks like inviting you to the arcade that one time was a double-edged sword.

“You’re going to the arcade? I’m really not too good at games. I’m more a physical type of person after all.”

“That’s no good. Those who call themselves vampire ninjas must learn all different types of skills.”

And even Sera showed up. What was up with today? Ah, could it be that Yuu came, so Sera followed her, and then Haruna also came because she didn’t want to be alone?

“I guess I’ll give in. Should we go to the arcade again?”

“Hooray!!” Haruna seemed incredibly happy.

“I guess I’ll go,” said a rather nonplussed-looking Sera.

And then, as for Yuu, who looked incredibly lonely...

I am-

I still don’t know what her thoughts were when she wrote that incomplete memo, that memo that she could not write any further.

Part 3

We played deep into the night. When I got back home, I immediately headed for the second floor. Haruna had yelled herself hoarse with joy and headed for the bathroom, Sera headed to the bathroom to take a bath, while Yuu was probably in the living room, where she always was.

Not even changing out of my uniform, I dove into bed. Perhaps because I was so tired, I felt drowsiness attack me even though I had slept plenty that day. And I didn't have the strength left to fight that drowsiness.

I closed my eyes...

“Ayumu!”

Haruna's one shout dispersed all my drowsiness. I jumped up, and looked at Haruna with half-asleep eyes.

Haruna was holding a single memo.

“This is...”

I stared at the first sentence written on the page.

Goodbye.

I leapt up out of bed, brushed Haruna aside, and left my room. I ran down the stairs and went into the living room.

The photos we had taken at the photo booth that one time were placed on the table.

These were the ones that I had given Yuu, the ones that mostly had me in the frame being kicked and panicking.

That envelope was also thrown into the garbage can.

This was the envelope that the bunny Megalo had been carrying. Could it be that this envelope had been meant for Yuu?

Yuu and Megalo came from the same place, the Underworld.

So there was definitely a considerable chance that that was true.

But wasn't there just a blank sheet of paper in here? What was written on there? What was it used for?

At that moment, I had a flash of insight.

Those glasses. If I used those glasses that could see through anything on this blank sheet of paper, would I be able to figure something out? Maybe the reason Yuu left was also connected to that piece of paper.

I returned to my own room and put on those glasses. As expected, I saw words appear on the white piece of paper.

Here is a sum up of what was written:

The fact that the King of the Night is making fake Megalo, and the fact that because of that, the vampire ninjas have been really active, all of that is Yuu's fault.

Why the hell did everything always have to be Yuu's fault?!

Did this get on Yuu's mind and cause her to run off? It can't have, right?

I picked up the photos and ran towards my front door. I haphazardly stepped into my shoes and left the house with them only half on.

The remainder of the memo Yuu had left read as follows:

I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

If it wasn't for me, this town wouldn't have gotten like this.

"Yuu!" I yelled out, but of course there was no response. "Dammit!"

I frantically looked around me.

Where was she?

Where did she go off to?

Sera, Haruna, Ayumu. All of you spoke such kind words to me.

It made me so happy. And I began to take that for granted.

The convenience store, the graveyard, the school.

I hit all the usual places nearby, but I didn't find Yuu.

Had she really left this world behind?

**But I am not someone who can be together with others.
Everything is my fault. I'm sorry.**

Yuu was not the one who was wrong here.

It was me. I was wrong. All I could spit out were cheap words, empty promises that I would do anything for her, and in the end I just left her alone with that lonely expression of hers.

I'm sorry for always causing you such pain. If I stayed with you, I'm sure that someday, someone else would have gotten hurt.

Even though Yuu had looked so lonely back then, I didn't do a single thing for her.

I was an idiot. A huge, huge idiot. I hadn't spent even an ounce of energy to try and maintain this small bit of happiness I had achieved by living with everyone.

Because I am one who calls death.

I raised my head up, and saw a huge stalk of bamboo, decorated with lights.

Dammit Haruna, have you not cleaned that up yet? I once again turned to the memo that Yuu had left.

So, goodbye.

Her last word was a bit blurred out.

Dammit! Why did she just decide this all on her own?! She was worse than Haruna!

Just tell me! If you're in pain, or if something is bothering you, then just tell me!

I went up the stairs, to Sera's room. Going out onto the Veranda, I took one of the tanzaku in my hands, knowing it wouldn't come true.

"Ugh..." I let out a pathetic-sounding moan.

There was Haruna's tanzaku.

Give us snow. Enough snow that everyone here can see it. If it's not enough I'll kill you, okay?

There was Sera's tanzaku.

Let my cooking skills double. Let my cooking bring smiles to all the faces of the people here. Let my cooking skills double again.

There was Yuu's tanzaku.

I wish that I will always be able to be with Ayumu and the others.

And then, there was mine.

I wish that none of the wishes will come true.

Why? Why? Why was it that the only wish that came true was the one I had written?

I wiped off the heated tears that streamed down my cheeks, and took off my tanzaku from the bamboo stalk. I crushed it in my hands. And then I realized that I had also crushed the photo booth

photos I had been holding in my hands at the same time.

I took out the photos and reopened them. These were the photos that Yuu had said she wanted all of, and not just a half. When I looked closely... I saw that Yuu was also showing in a corner of the photo...

-

And she was showing the camera a happy smile.

-

I lost the strength in my legs.

Waves of regret flowed through me, and I could feel my vision darkening.

“Ayumu!”

Haruna was calling me, but I couldn’t hear her.

... Yuu.

..... Yuu.

..... Eucliwo-

I felt someone knee me and I fell to the side.

“What the hell are you doing, Haruna?! Did you bite me?!”

“What are you moping about?! You idiot!”

“Yes, Ayumu. It’s not like this was her final farewell.”

When I turned around, I saw Sera standing there, wrapped in a bath towel with her arms folded.

“Let’s go get them back! Dai-sensei and that gloomy necromancer!”

“But Haruna. Yuu left by herself. So we can’t-“

“As if I care! I said we would go get them back!”

As usual, Haruna wasn't in the mood to listen to the opinions of others. I was always the one getting led around. But...

This time, it was my turn to do the leading.

END EPILOGUE

END VOLUME 2

Afterword

Everyone has courage. They just don't know how to use it.

Next time. No, definitely next time.

I clasped my hands together and put my elbows on the table. There was around a minute and a half until I got my next chance.

The minute this soothing music stopped, the match would start.

And then... the fated time arrived. The thing in question headed for me. I unclasped my hands and reached out my arm.

No! Impossible! That's twice in a row! This is...!!

I lifted up my extended arm a bit. If I just pushed this button... that's all it would take. I wasn't asking for anything special. But even then... I gripped my hands into a fist and put both hands back on the table.

I give up.

I'm giving up on getting any tekkamaki.⁵⁵

I really didn't like how they ran these rotary sushi restaurants.

If I wanted to eat something like tsubugai⁵⁶, I would order it. But if I wanted something like tuna or shrimp, I would wait for it to come around on the conveyer belt. At times like those, I couldn't help but think that I was a coward.

-

Thanks to all your support, I've finished the second volume. Also, the reason I can go eat at rotary sushi restaurants is also due to my readers, Kobuichi-san, and Muririn-san.

How was the new character Tomonori?

If I were to sum up the second volume in a nutshell, I would probably say "something something something Tomonori."

The volume is chock full of love comedy-ish parts, such as when Haruna gets a bit jealous, and all the verbal quarrels between Ayumu and Sera.

And then, most of all, there's Yuu. Many of you have probably already thought about it.

Why was it... why was it that I made the scythe she's holding in the cover illustration into a hug pillow?

Well, it's just that I wrote this volume while thinking how nice it would be if the heroines could fit my tastes, and it suddenly became like that. I ended up transmitting all this new nonsense out... I really am very sorry about that (in Jack Bauer's voice).

In any case, in writing this volume, there's one thing that bothered me.

And that was: how long is this series going to continue? When people start talking about printing a second edition or initial sales momentum, all I can do is just nod back at them.

I didn't have any prior knowledge of the publishing business. I still don't have much. I didn't even know when Fantasia Bunko had set the sale date of my book... and what exactly was a second edition supposed to be anyways?

And then, my manager introduced me to a nice industry guy, Ootsuka-san.

"He really put his support behind Korezon."

Ah, what a nice guy. A Really. Nice. Guy. To think he would go through the effort and explain second editions and returns and all the bookstore things to me, and then that he would support the Korezon sequels...

And in return, I vowed in my heart that I would write something nice for this nice guy. And then...

Alright... I'll be brave and say it! Right now! Mr. Manager!

“Please give me illustrations!”

“I’ll give you some if I feel like it.”

“You demon, how dare you hold Kobuichi-san and Muririn-san’s lovely illustrations hostage like that!!”

“Well, I’ve definitely already sent illustrations off to all the authors other than Kimura-san.”

..... Huh? I-In the end, am I going to get any illustrations for Volume 3?!

What kind of illustrations of Yuu are going to come after this?!
Please take care of me for Volume 3 as well!

Being able to put out the second volume like this was not just a result of my own strength, but was due to the efforts of all the people involved and all our readers. I humbly offer my eternal gratitude to all the people who exhausted their strength to make this work, and all the people who read it. Well then, until Volume 3!

- 2009 April, Kimura Shinichi

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Translation Notes

- 1 Japanese equivalent of “Primetime” here.
- 2 One of those long sticks with a hand at the end that you can open and close with a switch.
- 3 Broth made with pork.
- 4 Idiot is baka. Ba = VERTICAL, ka = CAMembert. Yeah it doesn’t really work, I agree.
- 5 Older sister, but can also be used to generally refer to slightly older women.
- 6 In Japanese, the word “urusai,” which means “noisy” or generally “shut up,” actually derives from “May’s fly.” May refers to May in the old Japanese calendar, which is actually July. In July, flies are the most annoying.
- 7 A type of black-ish seaweed.
- 8 A jelly food product. Sometimes made into noodles. Supposedly healthy.
- 9 Type of traditional Japanese drama. The makeup is very distinctive.
- 10 Apparently this is a thing. It might have originated from Kinnikuman, whose main character had this kanji written on his forehead.
- 11 This segment is much less awkward sounding in the Japanese, as Japanese doesn’t really frequently use gender-specific pronouns like “his” or “her.”
- 12 He may be batman, but he should be very, very afraid.
- 13 A car, made by Mitsubishi. For a long time, this used to be the grand prize in a darts contest.

14 This was a reference to Jero, an enka singer.

15 Uma is horse in Japanese.

16 Play on Wanderlei Silva, a Brazilian mixed martial artist. Yes, his nickname really is the “Terrifying Kneecap” in Japan. Weird.

17 According to a friend of mine, a super cereal Macross fanboy who is going to be pissed when he sees himself referred to like that, this line is something said by the Zentradi race in Macross to express surprise or disbelief.

18 Effing puns. Monster is “youkai,” and melt is “youkai suru.” Hence the sentence was “youkai wo youkai saseru.” So funny -_-

19 Effing, effing puns. “To have an effect” here is “sayou.” And Ayumu uses the informal question marker “kai” at the end. So he says this as “sayoukai?” hence extending the terrible pun chain.

20 Reference to Heroic Age. I honestly think this is Haruna’s first reference I didn’t have to look up.

21 Japanese star festival. Probably best known for the custom of writing wishes on slips of paper and hanging them up on bamboo plants.

22 Apparently the Japanese decorate their Christmas trees with cotton. Weird.

23 I really hope this impresses upon you just how terribly Japanese people can mispronounce English words.

24 The male protagonist in the legend of Tanabata.

25 The strips of paper you write wishes on for Tanabata.

26 Koshien is a baseball tournament. No, it’s really not supposed to make sense.

27 Not sure if this is a specific reference to a video game sword or not.

28 Have to leave this in Japanese in order for the next string of puns to work. What follows is a bunch of words that all are pronounced as “kouka” in Japanese.

29 Reference to the Halloween chant from Bastard. Sappari.

30 Here you go.

31 A legless Gundam, apparently.

32 A play on words, since the first three syllables of the Japanification of the word “centaur” is “kenta,” so this is an obvious reference to a certain other fast food chain.

33 Photo booth. I kept it this way so the next few lines would make sense.

34 Reference to three giants in Greek mythology.

35 Usagi is rabbit in Japanese.

36 Untranslatable pun here. Bride is “yome” while your remaining time span is “yomei,” leading to Haruna’s statement here.

37 Probably a reference to an old Japanese folk tale, where a raccoon makes a boat out of mud for a boat race, but the boat begins to dissolve in the middle of the race.

38 There was a pun here where Haruna combined the words “masaka” and “moshikashite” to form “mosaka,” which Ayumu is commenting on here. That pun itself is impossible to translate, so instead I tried to encapsulate the mood the best I could.

39 Pro-wrestling move.

40 Obviously a very, very, VERY bad bun on the English alphabet.

41 If you actually have the patience to parse this and read it backwards, it translates to “All the fools before my eyes, I apologize, but please burn to cinders. This is worse than the fires of hell, isn’t it?”

42 Dai means “big” or “grand,” and chou is a more exaggerated form of big, like “super.”

43 Japanese comedian and actor.

44 Actually, karaage could technically be fish, or other things, but I went with the most common conception of it.

45 Edward Elric’s porn name, I’ll bet.

46 Rather elaborate Japanese cuisine where you cook wheat noodles and flow them in cold water down a bamboo pipe. People wait at the bottom and grab the noodles when they get down there.

47 She actually says “if you’re ready” in Kansai-ben, but I tried to localize the translation.

48 Roasted rice pilaf topped with cheese and cream.

49 Character from Future GPX Cyber Formula. What the hell ever.

50 According to Wikipedia, this is a variation on Rock-Paper-Scissors, where the winner of each rock-paper-scissors has the right to smack the loser, and the loser has to try to defend before that happens.

51 One of those things you often see in slice of life anime, where students go into an empty building or some other “scary” place to test their courage and promote teamwork or some shit.

52 Roughly translates to “Flying Blade, Hundred Demon Gradual Death.”

53 In Japanese, there are two different words for something existing – one that is used to refer to animate objects (iru), and one that is used to refer to inanimate objects (aru). Dai-sensei used the former, which is suspicious if what she gave to Ayumu had been something that wasn’t alive.

54 A baseball player.

55 Type of tuna sushi.

56 Type of sea mollusk, a bit less common than normal cuts of fish in japan.